

Joan Baez

"I'm past living the myth  
of being Joan Baez"

Reviews

Pieta Brown  
Paradise Outlaw

"Languid, entrancing and utterly  
bewitching."

# penguin eggs

Shirley Collins

Oscar Lopez

The Bombadils

Mandolin Orange

The Alan Kelly Gang

Catherine MacLellan

Bigail Washburn & Bela Fleck

Penguin Eggs  
Album of the Year

AMELIA CURRAN



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Issue No. 64 Winter 2014 \$5.99



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# matthew byrne



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**C** Catherine MacLellan  
v from Irish fiddle tunes  
Haida legends to create  
stellar new recording,  
*Raven's Sun*.

## Cover Story

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Possibly the finest interpreter of traditional songs in the country, his latest album, *hearts & heroes*, certainly provides ample evidence.

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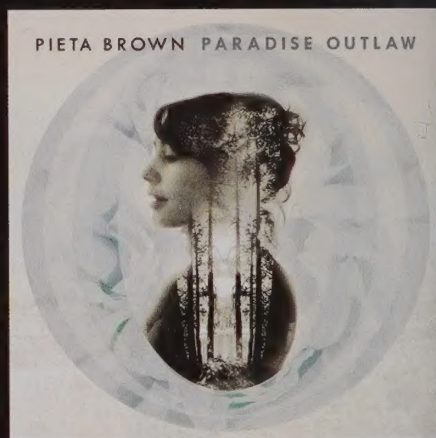


## PIETA BROWN PARADISE OUTLAW

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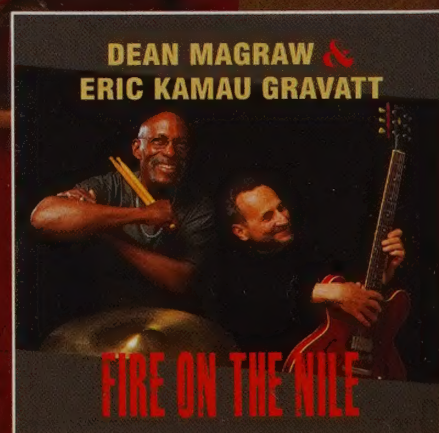
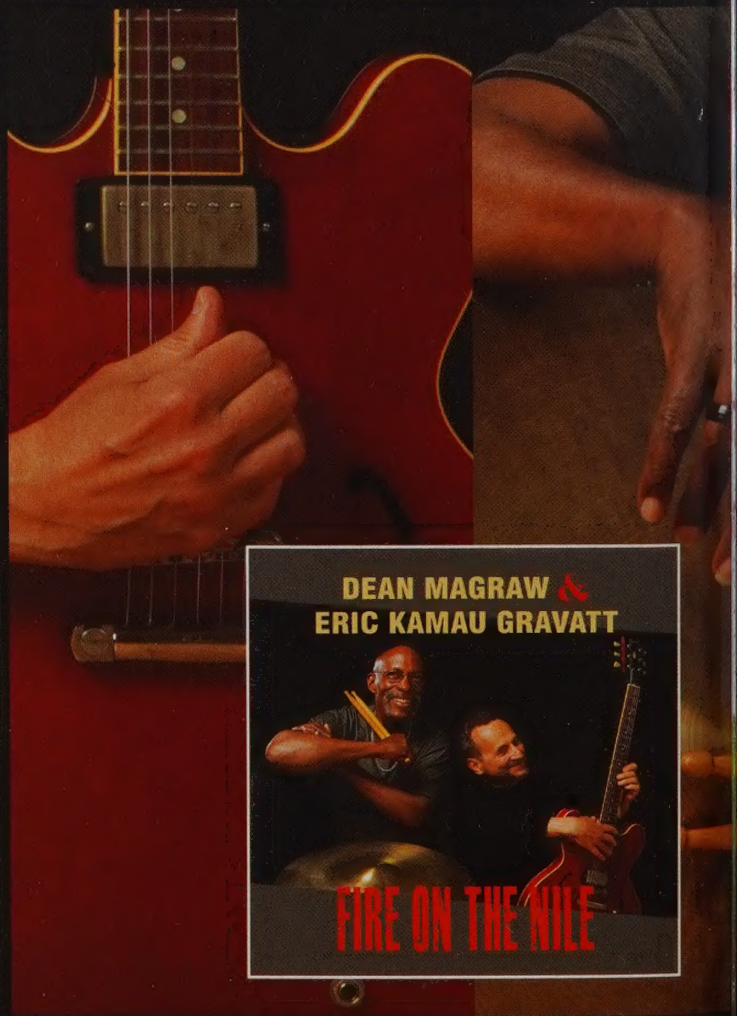
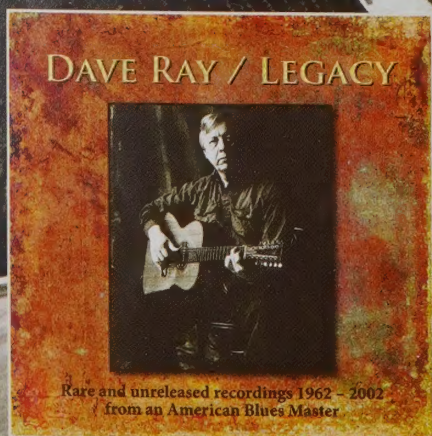
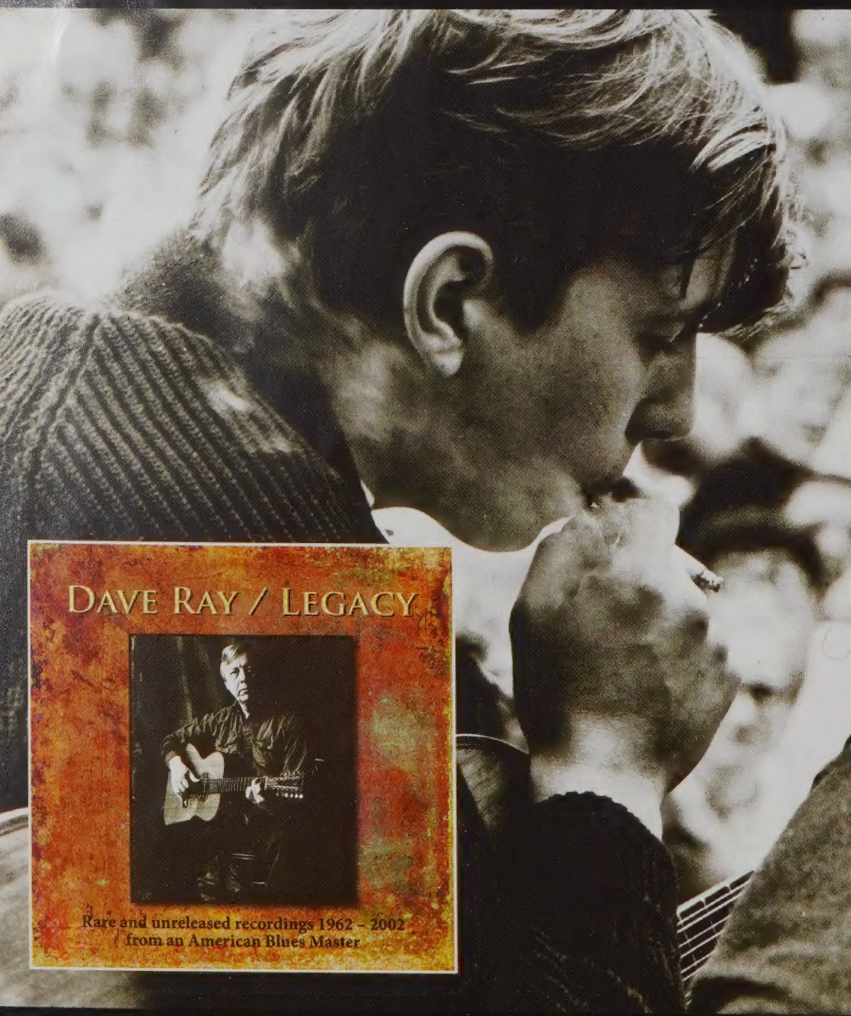
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# Content

## Editorial

Roddy Campbell enjoys a face full of humble pie as Tanya Tagaq wins the prestigious Polaris Music Prize.

## Long Player

The Record That Changed My Life: Eve Goldberg revisits the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's epic, *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*.

## Charts

The best-selling recordings in a variety of national stores, plus the most-played albums on key Canadian radio stations.

## Swansongs

*Penguin Eggs* pays tribute to Maggie Boyle, Manitas de Plata, and U. Srinivas.

## A Quick Word...

with graphic artist Michael Wrycraft, and the new interim content director at CKUA Radio, David Ward.

## Introducing

Steph Cameron, All Day Breakfast Stringband, The Blue Drop, The Benoits, and Cassie & Maggie MacDonald.

## Joan Baez...

shares her humour and anecdotes about the likes of Steve Jobs and Martin Luther King Jr. during The *Penguin Eggs* Interview.

## Record Reviews

Hot Rize: "It may be their strongest release ever, and with 24 years since the last studio recording, it certainly doesn't come a moment too soon."

## Contest

Win a copy of Leonard Cohen's new disc, *Popular Problems*.

## En français

Les Poules À Colin et Les Benoits.

## A Point of View

Arthur McGregor, director of the Ottawa Folklore Centre, reassesses his opinion regarding the "new" Ottawa Folk Festival.



Abigail Washburn and Bela Fleck



Shirley Collins



Steph Cameron



Mandolin Orange



The Alan Kelly Gang



le Bombadils



# penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

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Canada



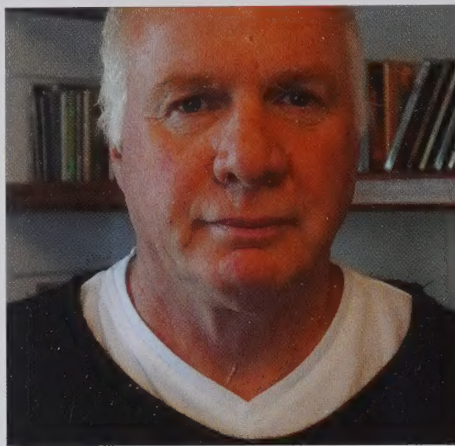
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# Editoria



My initial inclination for this editorial fixated on a good roasting for the Polaris Music Prize—the national award ‘recognizing albums of the highest artistic integrity, without regard to musical genre’. “Bollocks,” I thought. There are 200 jurors judging this prize and out of that lot, probably four could hum a line from Stan Rogers’s epic *Northwest Passage*. The other 196 pundits, apparently, cover a multitude of sins while earning a daily crust massaging the egos of rock and pop performers for the likes of Much Music and the *National Post*. Sniff. Whatever, this lot historically vote for the latest indie darlings, don’t they. World music? Blues? Classical? Country? Jazz? Folk? On yer bike, son. No chance.

As the event approached I never, for the life of me, saw a banana skin. After all, this year’s finalists included such bookies’ favourites as Arcade Fire and Drake. But on Sept. 22, 2014, Tanya Tagaq was declared the winner of the ninth annual Polaris Music Prize and its \$30,000 reward for *Animism*—an album that pays tribute to one of the oldest traditional forms of folk music in North America, Inuit throat singing. I almost choked on my espresso. “Tanya Tagaq won

the Polaris!” I blurted out over my laptop. I was in Sicily at the time. The locals simply smiled at me, bemused. Sitting there, grinning like the proverbial simpleton, I had never thought for a minute Tagaq would have won. Not because her record didn’t deserve the recognition. It most certainly did. I just thought its raw, complex content was way beyond the scope of its jurors.

That night, the wry but insightful klezmer accordionist Geoff Berner introduced Tagaq prior to her gala performance. And in his eloquent opening remarks he made reference to the essence of her album drawing from a tradition tens of thousands of years old.

“The innovation on *Animism* is an argument not for moving beyond but for putting more emphasis on the value and necessity of the traditions. The rootedness is where the newness of the record comes from,” said Berner.

Exactly. But let me remind you you can hear the same principle applied to the music of Matthew Byrne, Les Poules à Colin, The Alan Kelly Gang, and Cassie and Maggie MacDonald, written about elsewhere in this magazine.

Tagaq’s victory surely reinforces the value and need for promoting traditional music in this country at a time when such high-profile festivals as Ottawa appears to have abandoned its cultural roots and core musical policies. Please read Arthur McGregor’s commentary on page 74.

To the multiple jurors who had the courage and foresight to vote for Tagaq’s challenging but beautiful recording, let me offer my sincere and heartfelt congratulations on such a virtuous decision. Humble pie never tasted so good.

— Roddy Campbell



## Eve Goldberg



Eve Goldberg pays homage to the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's epic, *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*.

As a teenager I spent far too much time in record stores. There was something about the tactile experience of flipping through a stack of LPs that fed my soul. The twelve-inch cardboard canvasses spoke in code to me, bringing up clues about what might be locked in the grooves.

Around 1986, my last year of high school, I was perusing the bins at one of my regular hangouts, when I noticed an unusual-looking album. It featured a Civil-War-style portrait of a bearded man in a military uniform, framed by a series of iconic images: US and Confederate flags, cannons, lighthouses, a flotilla of ships. Along the top, old-fashioned calligraphy declared "William E. McEuen Presents: *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*."

Below that was a list of musicians: The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Mother Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, Roy Acuff, Merle Travis, Jimmy Martin, Vassar Clements, Junior Huskey, Norman Blake, Pete 'Oswald Kirby.' At the bottom read: "Music forms a new Circle." I recognized a few of the names—Doc Watson, Maybelle Carter, Roy Acuff—but other than that I had no idea what this album was about. Looking more closely, I realized it was a three-LP set. "Three LPs?" I thought to myself, "who puts out an album with three LPs?" I shrugged my shoulders, put it back in the bin, and left the store.

A week later, it was still there. Drawn in by the cover, I inspected more carefully. How could I have never heard of this recording? Who was this "Nitty Gritty Dirt Band" and what were Doc Watson and Maybelle Carter doing with them? I was intrigued, but again I left it behind, unsure if I should take the gamble. On my third visit, worried that someone else

would snap it up, I grabbed it. Safe at home, I put the first LP on the record player and sat back. My skepticism soon melted into enthusiasm as I soaked in the authentic sounds of a full-on bluegrass-country jam. I was hooked.

The music was loose, and inviting, and approachable. Although there were a lot of musicians, you could hear every single instrument and voice clearly. The playing was superb. I already knew some of the songs and tunes, but even the ones I had never heard before felt familiar.

Between songs, the musicians bantered about what key to play the song in, or where the breaks were going to be. In one incredible exchange, Doc Watson meets Merle Travis for the first time.

Most of all, what came through was the joyful camaraderie of a group of excellent musicians making great music together. Occasionally there was a bum note, a timing glitch, a slight tuning issue, or an ending that caught everyone off guard. Songs were punctuated by background studio noise, creaking chairs, throat clearing, players warming up. But that only served to remind me that I was listening to real musicians, playing live, together, in a room. And 37 tracks later, I was still hungry for more. The album became a staple of my listening. The songs became touchstones for me, leading

me back to original recordings and helping me connect in a genuine way with bluegrass and country music.

Later I learned that *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* is considered a landmark album that brought together young west-coast hippy country-rockers with older bluegrass and country musicians, and, in 1972—long before *O Brother Where Art Thou?*—helped introduce traditional bluegrass and country music to a younger fan base.

I can't honestly say that *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* was the one album that introduced me to bluegrass and traditional country music. Having grown up in a seriously folkie household, I had already heard traditional Appalachian music. But what I can say is that *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* was my secret discovery, my private portal into the music. I was captivated by the mutual respect between younger and older musicians that lay at the core of the album. And ultimately I understood a simple truth: bluegrass music is downright cool.

I also learned some important lessons. Sometimes the most precious and golden moments come from the simplicity of playing and singing a fine song with a bunch of friends. Remember your elders, seek them out, and learn from them. And, above all, when a record cover calls out to you, you should answer.

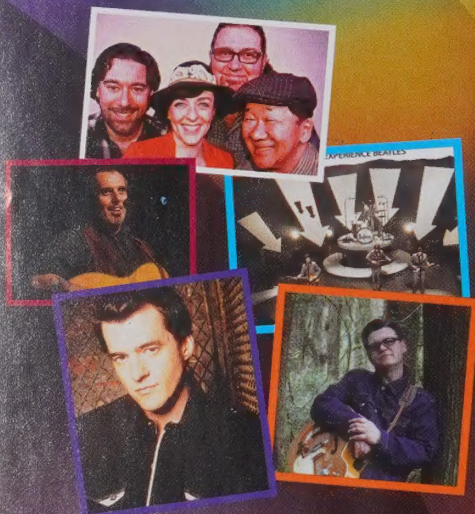




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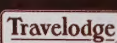
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## stingray top 10

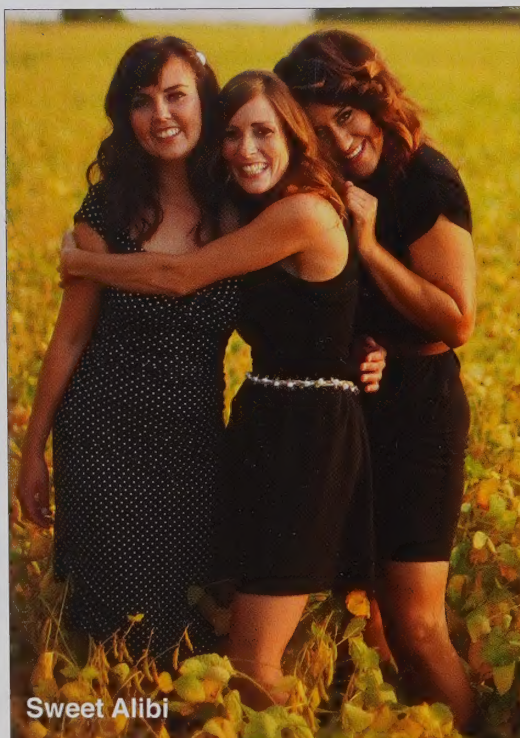
1. **The Duhks**  
Beyond the Blue (Compass)
2. **Lynne Hanson**  
River of Sand (Independent)
3. **Del Barber**  
Prairieography (True North)
4. **The Once**  
Departures (Nettwerk)
5. **Catherine MacLellan**  
The Raven's Sun (Independent)
6. **Fearing & White**  
Tea & Confidences (Lowden Proud)
7. **Doug Paisley**  
Strong Feelings (Warners)
8. **Craig Moreau**  
The Daredevil Kid (Independent)
9. **True North**  
Elsebound (Independent)
10. **John Fullbright**  
Songs (Blue Dirt Records)

Based on the most-played folk and roots discs played nationally on Stingray Music (formerly Galaxie Radio) throughout August, September and October 2014.

## fred's records top 5

1. **The Once**  
Departures (Nettwerk)
2. **Hey Rosetta!**  
Second Sight (Warner Music)
3. **The Once**  
The Once (Borealis)
4. **Matthew Byrne**  
Hearts & Heroes (Independent)
5. **Steve Maloney and the Wandering Kind**  
Steve Maloney and the Wandering Kind (Independent)

Based on album sales for August, September and October 2014 at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



Sweet Alibi

## matthew byrne's all-time top 10



Matthew Byrne

**Andy Irvine & Paul Brady**  
Andy Irvine & Paul Brady (Green Linnet)

**Archie Fisher & Garnet Rogers**  
Off The Map (Snow Goose Songs)

**James Keelaghan**  
A Few Simple Verses (Tranquilla Music)

**James Taylor**  
Sweet Baby James (Warner Bros.)

**Jim Payne & Fergus O'Byrne**  
Wave Over Wave (Singsong Inc.)

**Kate Rusby**  
Awkward Annie (Pure Records)

**Liz Carroll & John Doyle**  
Double Play (Compass Records)

**Martin Simpson**  
Prodigal Son (Topic Records)

**Ron Hynes**  
Get Back Change (Borealis)

**Stan Rogers**  
From Fresh Water (Fogarty's Cove Music)

Matthew Byrne's latest release is called hearts & heroes. Our cover on Matthew runs on page 48.

## wfmfms top 10

1. **Shovels & Rope**  
O Be Joyful (Dualtone Music Group)
2. **The Bros Landreth**  
Let it Lie (Independent)
3. **Shovels & Rope**  
Swimmin' time (Dualtone Music Group)
4. **Shakey Graves**  
And The War Came (Warner Music)
5. **The Strumbellas**  
We Still Move On Dance Floors (Warner Music)
6. **Ryan Adams**  
Ryan Adams (Universal)
7. **Leonard Cohen**  
Popular Problems (Columbia)
8. **The Wooden Sky**  
Let's Be Ready (Universal Music)
9. **Hurray for the Riff Raff**  
Small Town Heroes (Fontana North)
10. **Sweet Alibi**  
We've Got To (Independent)

Based on album sales for August, September, October, 2014, at the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival's Music Store, 203-Bannatyne Ave., Winnipeg, MB



## highlife top 10

**Frazey Ford**

Indian Ocean (Nettwerk)

**Leonard Cohen**

Popular Problems (Columbia)

**Robert Plant**

Lullaby and...The Ceaseless Roar (Nonesuch)

**Joe Driscoll & Sekou Kouyate**

Faya (Cumbancha)

**The War On Drugs**

Lost In The Dream (Secretly Canadian)

**Toure-Raichel Collective**

The Paris Session (Cumbancha)

**Lucinda Williams**

Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone (Highway 20)

**Keith Jarrett/Charlie Haden**

Last Dance (ECM)

**Budos Band**

Burnt Offering (Daptone)

**Prince Fatty meets Nostalgia 77**

Kingdom of Dub (TruThoughts)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2014, at  
ghlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

## permanent records top 10

**Ryan Adams**

Ryan Adams (Universal)

**Jennifer Castle**

Pink City (Idée Fixe)

**Elliott Brood**

Work & Love (Paperbag)

**Justin Townes Earle**

Single Mothers (Vagrant)

**Dave & Phil Alvin**

Common Ground (Yep Roc)

**Tweedy**

Sukierae (dBpm/ANTI)

**Owls By Nature**

The Forgotten and the Brave (Owls By Nature)

**Trampled By Turtles**

Wild Animals (Thirty Tigers)

**Sturgill Simpson**

Metamodern Sounds In Country Music (Thirty Tigers)

**Bahamas**

Bahamas is Afie (Brushfire/Universal)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2014, at  
ermanent Records, 8126 Gateway Blvd. Edmonton, AB, T6E 4B1



Robert Plant



Leonard Cohen

## sillons top 10

**1. Leonard Cohen**

Popular Problems (Columbia)

**2. Adam Cohen**

We Go Home (cOne Music)

**3. Chloé Sainte-Marie,**

À la croisée des silences (Independent)

**4. Mara Tremblay**

À la manière des anges (Distribution Select)

**5. Jorane**

Mélopée (Independent)

**6. Daran**

Le Monde Perdu (DEP)

**7. Robert Plant**

Lullaby and...The Ceaseless Roar (Nonesuch)

**8. Ben & Ellen Harper**

Childhood Home (Sony)

**9. Luluc**

Passerby (Independent)

**10. Lucinda Williams**

Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone (Highway 20)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2014, at  
Sillons, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

## soundscapes top 10

**1. Bahamas**

Bahamas is Afie (Brushfire/Universal)

**2. Jennifer Castle**

Pink City (Idée Fixe)

**3. Leonard Cohen**

Popular Problems (Columbia)

**4. Tanya Tagaq**

Animism (Six Shooter)

**5. Cold Specks**

Neuroplasticity (Arts & Crafts)

**6. Tweedy**

Sukierae (dBpm/ANTI)

**7. Lucinda Williams**

Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone (Highway 20)

**8. The Wooden Sky**

Let's Be Ready (Chelsea/Universal)

**9. Ryan Adams**

Ryan Adams (Universal)

**10. Various Artists**

Country Funk II: 1967-1974 (Light In The Attic)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2014, at  
Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

## ckua top 20

**1. Bahamas**

Bahamas is Afie (Brushfire/Universal)

**2. Ryan Adams**

Ryan Adams (Universal)

**3. The Wilderness Of Manitoba**

Between Colours (Pheromone)

**4. Beck**

Song Reader (Capitol)

**5. Leonard Cohen**

Popular Problems (Columbia)

**6. The Provincial Archive**

It's All Shaken Wonder (Black Box)

**7. Jenny Lewis**

The Voyager (Warner Brothers)

**8. Dr. John**

Ske-Dat-De-Dat: The Spirit Of Satch (Concord)

**9. Justin Townes Earle**

Single Mothers (ATO)

**10. Joe Henry**

Invisible Hour (Vagrant)

**11. Jenn Grant**

Compostela (Outside)

**12. The Rural Alberta Advantage**

Mended With Gold (Paper Bag)

**13. Sean Rowe**

Madman (ANTI)

**14. Eric Clapton and Friends**

The Breeze: An Appreciation of J.J. Cale (Surfdog)

**15. Robert Plant**

Lullaby and...The Ceaseless Roar (Nonesuch)

**16. Elizabeth Shepherd**

The Signal (Linus Entertainment)

**17. Catherine MacLellan**

The Raven's Sun (Independent)

**18. Jennifer Castle**

Pink City (Idée Fixe)

**19. Lucinda Williams**

Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone (Highway 20)

**20. The Barr Brothers**

Sleeping Operator (Secret City)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music dics on CKUA ra-  
dio - www.ckua.org - throughout August, September and October, 2014.



Elizabeth Shepherd





1956-2014

## Maggie Boyle

**T**he United Kingdom lost one of its most respected traditional singers Nov. 6 with the passing of Maggie Boyle of cancer. She was 57.

While North Americans may recognize Boyle's singing from the soundtracks to such films as *The Patriot Game* and *The Legends of the Fall*, she contributed to numerous albums by the likes of Bert Jansch, John Renbourn, Peter Bellamy and Steve Tilston, as well as making three solo recordings of her own: *Reaching Out* (1987), *Gweebarra* (1998) and *Won't You Come Away* (2012).

Boyle was born in London on Christmas Eve, 1956, to Irish parents. Paddy Boyle, her father, was a fine fiddler from Derryloughan, Co. Donegal, and her mother a traditional step dancer. Recognizing his daughter's prodigious talents, Paddy talked the Co Monaghan singer Oliver Mulligan, who then lived in London's Muswell Hill district, into providing Maggie with singing lessons. She would also join the London branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, the Irish organization that cultivates the

country's traditional music and dance. Through it she won All-Britain singing competitions and developed into a skilled flute, whistle, and bodhran player.

She described growing up in London amidst a backdrop of phenomenal traditional Irish musicians and singers to Nigel Schofield in *Living Tradition* magazine, issue No 97.

"It was a very strong musical community, partly because it was something that happened every day. Not necessarily anything formal, just people playing together, learning from each other. Every evening and Sunday lunch-time you could go and hear fantastic top-class Irish traditional music. There were people from all over Ireland who had moved to London and there were particular musical hot spots in each part of London—Fulham, Camden Town, and so on."

Boyle first performed in public at the age of 11, singing and playing in Irish clubs. She also played several gigs with her brothers Paul (fiddle) and Kevin (banjo, guitar) as The Boyle Family.

In 1984 she married Steve Tilston. He ran a folk club with Bert Jansch in New Kings Road, London, and would write songs covered by the likes of Fairport Convention, Dolores Keane and The House Band.

That same year, the Ballet Rampart dance company were in the throes of putting together a production of Christopher Bruce's *Sergeant Early's Dream*—a tale of Irish immigration which required singers and musicians to perform English, Irish, and American folk songs. The Belfast-born, London-based Mike Taylor played flute in the ballet's orchestra and recommended Maggie Boyle as a singer. Tilston, too, earned a part as a musician. At that production toured Europe and the U.S. for several years. Indeed, in the U.S. the occasional production included music by The Chieftans and Boyle singing.

Mike Taylor went on to serious commercial success in the U.K. with his band Incantation. Their album, *Pan Pipes of the Andes*, would go gold. It attracted the attention of Ennio Morricone, the legendary film composer, who invited them to play on the film *The Mission* starring Robert de Niro. This sparked off what was on a string of films on both sides of the Atlantic with many well-known composers including James Horner. It's through Taylor's connection with Horner that Boyle would sing on *The Patriot Game* and *The Legends of The Fall*.

Meanwhile, she would contribute to five of Steve Tilston's albums. The duo also joined John Renbourn's band Ship of Fools, which released one self-titled album in 1988.

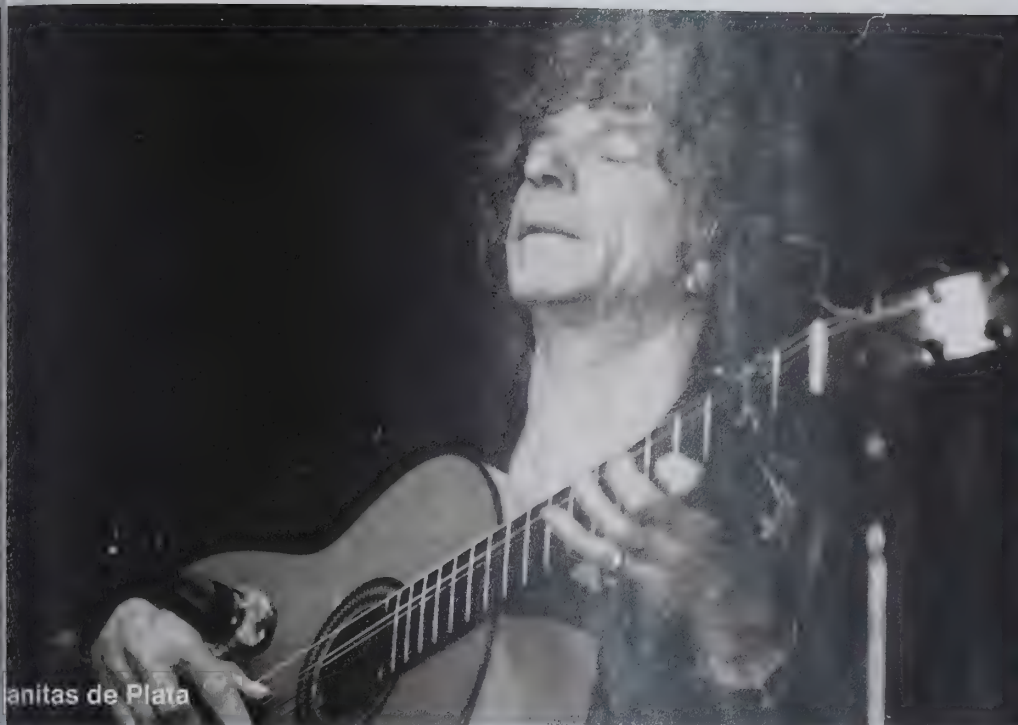
Oddly enough, Boyle is largely known as a solo artist, which seems strange considering the number of artists and bands she collaborated with on various diverse projects. Cue Skete with jazz guitarist Gary Boyle; *The Expatriate Game* with Duck Baker and Ben Paley; *Great Notes* with Helen Hockenhull and Lynda Hockenhull (with whom she recorded five albums); the folk opera *The Pauper's Path To Hope* with, amongst others, Mick Ryan and Judy Dunlop; the seasonal musical *The Magical Christmas Tree* with Pete Morton and Chris Parkinson...

While Maggie and Steve split up in 1997 they had two children: son Joe and daughter Molly. Both would become performers. In 2013, Maggie was diagnosed with bowel cancer.

Of her prodigious singing talents, the late Bert Jansch once said: "Maggie has a spell-binding, intoxicating quality in her voice which is extremely distinctive—must be the Irish in her ... a rare thing in today's music world."

— Roddy Campbell





## Manitas de Plata

Flamenco Guitar Pioneer  
Born 1921

The French flamenco guitarist Manitas de Plata, who died on Nov. 5, 2014, writes Ken Hunt, was one of the figures in the popularization of flamenco worldwide. He was born Ricardo Baliardo on Aug. 7, 1921, in the proverbial Gypsy caravan of the Languedoc-Roussillon region on the Mediterranean coast. Like many Gypsy musicians and dancers, he took a byname, becoming Manitas de Plata or Little Hands of Silver. He lived up to his reputation of having *doigts de platine*, an idiomatic French expression meaning to be nimble with the fingers.

His was a rags-to-riches story supreme. Unheralded, his idiosyncratic style of flamenco guitar in the early 1960s was as wild as his shock hair and attracted the attention of intellectual and artistic circles in France. To watch him and Pepe Reyes performing while Salvador Dalí's paintings in 1967 is most splendid theatre. His seven-track LP *Hommages* (1968) was followed by a 'Hommage À...', a tribute to the likes of people who had put him on the path. They included his mother, Pablo Picasso, Dalí, Jean Cocteau, Brigitte Bardot...and his guitar. One of the album's cover art showed his guitar with its original design motif; another showed him playing to a rapt sex kitten herself in close-up. His passions and imprecisions dogged his life. His previous ones were music, women, the number 13, and children ("dozens," he hazarded cheerfully) he had fathered (a fillip for his image), and

finances. He got it. He blew it. His professional relationship with Reyes took a tumble when he blew one tour's money, his kinsman's included, on a white Rolls-Royce. By the end of his life, he had turned into a riches-to-rags story. His devil-take-the-hindmost attitude to the taxman and his profligacy with earnings helped. The core Gypsy Kings include a coalition of their families. Blood proved thicker than mud. He died in Montpellier, not too far from Sète.

— Ken Hunt

## U. Srinivas

Alakolam Uthappa Srinivas  
Born 1969

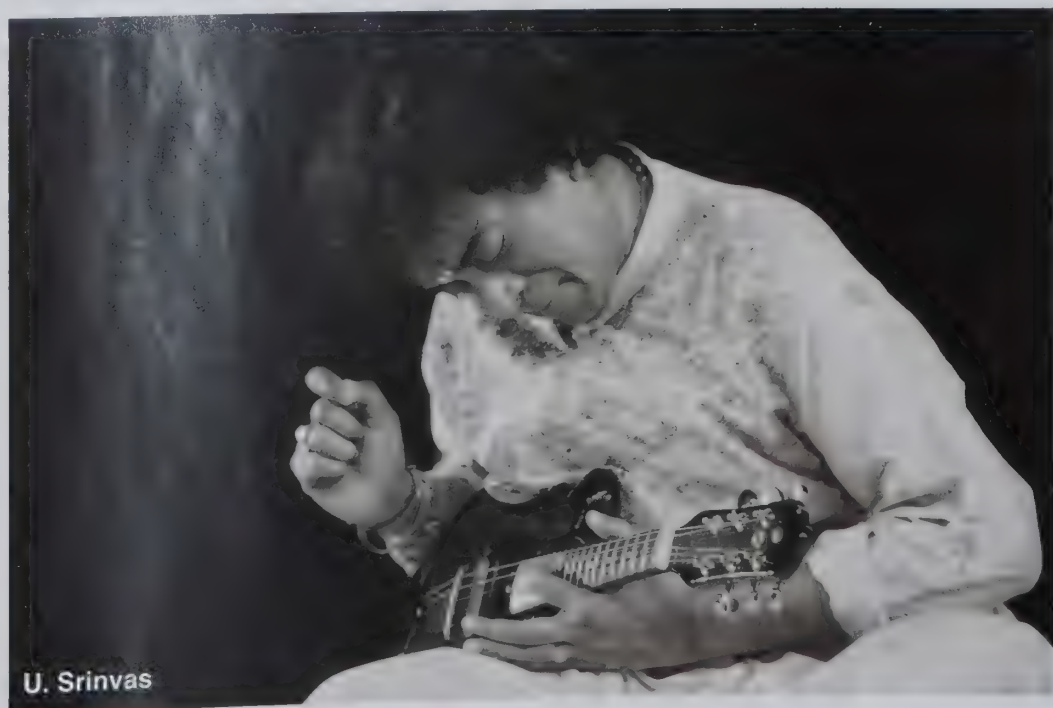
U. Srinivas's death at the age of 45 on Sept. 19, 2014, shocked the world of Indian art music. In the weeks after

his passing, both Zakir Hussain and Vishwa Mohan Bhatt gave dedications in London to the master of the Karnatic solid-body mandolin. His instrument had four single strings, and he later added a fifth, to create bass tones deeper than the mandolin is usually capable of producing. Srinivas revolutionized the five-stringed instrument and championed it in an array of South Indian art music and East-West fusion contexts. In the latter case, his work with, say, Michael Nyman, Remember Shakti (with Zakir Hussain and John McLaughlin) and the Miles Davis tribute project *Miles From India* (2008) was ground-breaking.

U. Srinivas (latterly increasingly rendered Shrinivas) was born on Feb. 28, 1969, in Palakolin in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari District. (By South Indian convention, the Uppalapu part of his name went unused.) A child prodigy, he debuted at the Sri Tyagaraja Aradhana Festival in Gudivada in 1981. The notes to *Mandolin Ecstasy* (1986) stated that the 13-year-old stole the show from Miles Davis in Berlin. Even his earliest recordings were remarkable. At one point George Harrison, according to his son, Dhani, hailed *Mandolin Ecstasy* as his favourite album.

Although Srinivas's innate gift was recognized from early on, many had reservations about his instrument—and subsequently there was a goodly amount of revisionism. Mandolin Srinivas won through. In terms of mandolin pioneers, he belongs in the exalted company alongside Dave Apollon, David Grisman, Bill Monroe, Tiny Moore, Yank Rachell, and Andy Statman. He died in Chennai, formerly Madras, but had been ailing for some time and had recently undergone a liver transplant.

— Ken Hunt





# Michael Wrycraft

A celebration of the work of Juno award-winning Toronto graphic artist Michael Wrycraft provided one of the undeniable highlights of the 2014 Folk Music Ontario conference. Sponsored by Borealis Records, this exhibition of Wrycraft's work featured almost 50 of his most-creative album covers, blown up and presented on a series of artist's easels. Wrycraft, over the course of almost 25 years and more than 500 album covers, has, arguably, developed into the pre-eminent designer for folk, roots, and blues recordings in the country. His clients include Bruce Cockburn, Blackie And The Rodeo Kings, and Watermelon Slim. While Wrycraft could talk for Canada, this interview is edited for brevity.

— Roddy Campbell

## Which album cover pleases you most?

The very first record I did for Bruce Cockburn, *Breakfast in New Orleans, Dinner in Timbuktu*; I'm terribly proud of that because it ended up in the Museum of Modern Art in New York for a year in an exhibition there. Amongst my absolute favourites is my Catherine Wheatley one, just because how close I was to Catherine, and how that sketch came out of me almost instantly, like I was in a séance and captured everything about her so perfectly. It's maybe my most satisfying thought-to-completion album. Those two would be amongst my favourites.

## What elements should a good album cover include?

A good album should either be provocative or evocative. In other words, whatever is on the cover should make you interested in hearing what's going on in the inside. My number one goal is for people to look at the cover and say, 'Wow, I really want to check out what's happening here'. That's my ultimate goal, really.

## Describe the process of designing a cover.

An artist will approach me. We have a meeting either in person or on the phone—I work with people all over the world. I will ask them various questions about the album. Is this your first album? Is this your tenth album? Do you have any particular ideas in mind? A title is something I like from the get-go. A title may suggest what we may do. But I'm not always one to do a linear idea based on the title. Sometimes it's fun to play against type. Sometimes it's fun to play with an image that has nothing to do with the title. Because, whatever it is in the end is what people will remember.

I'll ask, 'Has your image to be on the cover?' Or, 'Can I do something very creative without your image?' That will determine what direction I will go. Once I get the go ahead, I have to work with their image or create from scratch. Which is my favourite thing, coming up with an idea from nowhere. The music is also terribly important to me. The music speaks to me.

Whatever talent I have in this regard seems to be hearing music and coming up with images that suits the package.

I'll ask people for eight weeks to work on a project. The first four weeks is to come up with a variety of ideas to present and the final four weeks is basically taking whatever idea they have chosen and developing that, which is the puzzle of the layout. And that's basically the process from beginning to end.

## What was the most challenging album cover you've done?

I've two. HPSCHD [pronounced harpsichord]. John Cage, the godfather of new music, did a live concert in 1968 at the University of Illinois. It involved eight harpsichordists playing completely different scores, so you could imagine the cacophony. At the same time, projected onto the walls of the venue, was NASA slides from the first space walks. The whole place was lit in black-light and the audience was encouraged to come in T-shirts, which would be silk-screened in fluorescent paint so you could walk around glowing in the dark. Large silk-screened posters were also created during the event.

The Electronic Music Foundation in the States wanted to release a recording of this concert and asked me to do the cover. Because of the crazy visuals, I created a box of cards and each had a continuing story of the original event. When you turned the cards over and put them together it made a giant black-light poster. It ended up winning a couple of awards in the States but it took about a year to do the whole thing. It was a crazy job.

The other, Oliver Schroer's *Camino*. It's his tour-de-force, his *Purple Rain*. He walked the Camino de Santiago trail through Spain and France and recorded in various churches along the way. It includes a 28-page booklet describing his journey through the Pyrenees in English, French, Spanish, and German that I had to follow a series of photos that he had taken along the trip. The text was all done poetically. So to put together the four languages in text to follow in some kind of a sequence through the thing, was mind-numbing. It almost broke up as friends. It was the most difficult package I have ever worked on, with a horrible time pressure.

## Will the exhibit tour?

There's a lot of plans afoot. Should the idea be picked up by people I'd be willing to add a few more pieces

[www.wrycraft.com](http://www.wrycraft.com)



David Ward will tell you, in no uncertain terms, he was made for his current job. As interim content director at CKUA—the pre-eminent folk-roots, community-supported radio station in the country—the man clearly exudes enthusiasm for the work at hand. Ward started at CKUA in 1982 as a part-time librarian before hosting numerous shows ranging from bluegrass to classical. He also played a prominent role in resurrecting the station in 1994 when faced with closure after the Alberta government ended its funding. While Ward left CKUA in 2011 to produce CBC Radio 2's national jazz show, *Tonic*, he fell victim to the recent merciless federal government funding cutbacks. In his absence, CKUA moved into a new, state-of-the-art, \$7-million building in 2012.

— Roddy Campbell

**What is your biggest challenge at CKUA?**

Remaining relevant to enough people who will support the station. That's the key part. Generally, you can count on 10 per cent of your listeners for [financial] support. Our audience is aging and the challenge is to provide relevant programming, while hoping to attract a younger audience, but a younger audience that will ultimately contribute financially. As you know, we don't get government grants.

**How do you attract a younger audience?**

That's been the subject of many debates. I'm sort of in the middle of that right now. I came back in August and we've just come through [autumn] fundraising campaign. So I'm in the middle of going through every single comment that was made about the programming, the sounders, or styles of music that people like. Every pledge form had a comment, which I've been going through to see what we can glean to help guide us.

When the previous programmer left, his mission was for us to begin skewing consciously towards a younger audience. We've been working on that but the fundraiser will probably give me some pause to reconsider that strategy. I'm not taking that to management. We're not seeing the results that we would like to see. And then the challenge becomes, 'How much longer can we continue in this vein?' because, we are certainly getting some push back from our core audience. Like all things in life, trying to craft a balance is a tricky thing. Say, for example, have more contemporary music that might have an appeal to a younger audience but yet at the same time as that stuff is introduced you are staying in balance and your core



supporters aren't saying, 'Hey, this no longer sounds like me'. I think that's the challenge.

I think folk festivals have the same challenge. CKUA is certainly not alone in trying to sort out the challenges of an aging demographic, who at one point were young and supported organizations and built them up. But now we are starting to see they are aging. Some are passing away, as we all will, but how does any organization face that challenge?

**What is your ultimate goal for CKUA?**

My goal is for CKUA to survive. There's a lot of stuff going on. Ten years ago I couldn't have the world's music on my phone. Now I can. So many changes have happened technologically with the dissemination of music it's a distinct challenge. The newspapers are seeing it. Public broadcasters are definitely seeing it. CBC has different challenges. In the States, they are facing similar things, an aging audience. But in the States they are dealing with news and current affairs, for the most part, so they have a slightly different situation. So, survival, and to build this bridge to whatever the future is going to be. The next challenge for us is Wi-Fi in cars. Wi-Fi will come to car radios in 2017 or 2018. [Currently] you can only get the stations wherever you are unless you have satellite radio. Once cars have Internet radio, your choices will increase tenfold. We might find some audience listening to us somewhere else

but a lot more people here will have a lot more choice. The key is CKUA surviving and staying relevant in a very quickly changing world.

**What are the strengths of CKUA?**

It's history. It's loyal, devoted audience has kept us alive. The diversity of music. Campus stations certainly play a wider range of music. The quality of their presentation varies very widely. I think our consistency in regard to presentation; people can count on us to be pretty consistent, in not only our musical offerings but in the support we have always given to local, regional, and national artists and by airing things that are not easily heard in other places.

**Will you implement any new programming?**

Programming always needs a change. There'll be some new changes in January. Sponsorship for our arts program came to an end and we found we couldn't afford to keep that show on the air. It's going to come out of the schedule at the end of the year, which means we have a couple of holes. With Peter North moving along—he's now AD of Salmon Arm [Roots & Blues Festival]—one of his shows is dropping out, *Points North*. So that prompted some changes. I've still a meeting to select which changes we will bring in January.

[www.ckua.com](http://www.ckua.com)



# Introducing Steph Cameron



Music has been a part of Steph Cameron's life for as long as she can remember. As a child, her gospel-singing grandmother taught her to sing such blues standards as *House of the Rising Sun*. As a teenager, she immersed herself in the vibrant punk and hip-hop scenes of her native Saskatoon. This diverse musical upbringing has helped sculpt Cameron into Canada's latest roots darling.

"I really started listening to folk in my early teens because I was really into punk and there are similarities between folk and punk," Cameron says. "Some of the punk bands would play and there'd be a folk opener. All those old labour songs, all the Woody Guthrie stuff, it's the same sort of attitude – that kind of street element, which is coming from a place of poverty and disenfranchised people."

*Sad-Eyed Lonesome Lady*, her debut album, has received nothing short of glowing and effusive praise since its release in September. The warm reception has startled Cameron.

"It took a lot of soul searching for me to decide if I really wanted to do this because it wasn't my intention at all. When it presented itself as an opportunity, I was really taken aback."

Cameron was content to play her songs in backyards and coffee shops around her home base of Winlaw in the picturesque and hippie-heavy Kootenays region of southeastern British Columbia. But after being pressured by a friend, she recorded a home-made demo, which her pal then passed along to Cowboy Junkies bassist Alan Anton. Impressed, Anton contacted Cameron and told her he wanted to help kickstart her career.

"He gave the demo to Kim Cooke and Kim listened to it and loved it," Cameron recalls.

Cooke, a Canadian music industry veteran and owner of Pheromone Recordings (home to Chantal Kreviazuk, Mo Kenney, and Skydiggers), invited Cameron to Toronto to meet up and record a track in his studio. That song, the spirited *Goodbye Molly*, was finished in an hour. And for the next three days, Cameron and Cooke recorded what would become *Sad-Eyed Lonesome Lady*.

"The record just spontaneously happened," Cameron says. "The songs were all there. There was a bit of picking and choosing from other songs I had but I was really confident in those songs."

Her confidence is warranted. The 13 tracks on *Sad-Eyed Lonesome Lady* are elegant, simple, and captivating, lifted by Cameron's plaintive yet playful vocals and exceptional guitar-playing skills.

The title track highlights Cameron's ability to thread together traditional British and American folk and country melodies with the unique ambience of classic Canadiana.

"I remember when I started playing on the guitar and writing that song it really excited me because it reminded me of Ramblin' Jack Elliott and players like that. I was always very proud of that melody."

There is a mournful underpinning to *Sad-Eyed Lonesome Lady*, and Cameron—who spent several years living on the streets of Vancouver, working as an income assistance welfare and tenancy advocate—explains the pain behind some of her lyrics comes from her experiences in the city's poverty-stung downtown east side, including the accidental death of a close friend.

"It was a very traumatic time for me and my community. It was a hard thing to deal with and these songs kind of came out of that time in my life. It's me reflecting on the life I have led and the tragedy I've experienced. But also reflecting on all the good things that have come out of it."

— By Lisa Wilton







# Introducing All Day Breakfast Stringband

**T**hanks to such bands as Arcade Fire, Wolf Parade, and many others, Montreal has earned its reputation as one of the world's most innovative music cities. But what's often overlooked is Montreal's vibrant roots music scene, comprised of a surprisingly large number of young players dedicated to carrying on the traditions of previous centuries.

All Day Breakfast Stringband is one of the latest groups to be spawned from the scene's weekly jam sessions, and are quickly establishing themselves beyond Montreal's city limits. The band's new 13-track album, *Shanghai*, sparkingly captures their rough-and-ready harmonies and virtuosity, centred around fiddler Max Evans, mandolin player Andrew Kobus, and Matt James on clawhammer banjo. Tying it all together is guitarist/vocalist Dara Weiss, who as host of Montreal radio station CKUT's bluegrass program has been one of the scene's driving forces for several years.

She says that unlike other musical projects she's been involved with, the focus of All Day Breakfast Stringband from day one has been to play in the traditional Appalachian style as faithfully as possible. "Most of the tunes on the new album come from Virginia, West Virginia, and North Carolina," she says. "It's hard to say if we have a different take on it. I think we, and a lot of the other younger musicians we know in the scene, play in a more hard-driving style because we grew up listening to punk and other things. We're also Canadians who live in a big city but we really love this music and have no desire to try to modernize it."

Their commitment to this approach has been steadily building their reputation among old-time music fans in the U.S. as well. For the past two years, the group has won accolades at the Appalachian String Band Festival in Clifftop, WV, and Weiss is hopeful that they will be able to make more inroads with the release of *Shanghai*. Based solely on those performances on the album, recorded over five days at a Vermont farmhouse, it's hard to deny that All Day Breakfast Stringband can go toe-to-toe (or bow-to-bow) with any other band in this genre.

"It's all fiddle-based music, really," Weiss says. "If Max brings in a tune he's really excited about, we'll play along and see if it works. I'll also bring in songs I'd like to sing and we'll try those. We play for hours when we get together; we don't consider it rehearsing. The songs that become our favourites are the ones we end up recording, and on this record we tried to have a good mix of classics and songs that probably a lot of people haven't heard before."

So what is it, precisely, that makes Montreal such a hotbed for old-time music? Weiss credits it to the sense of community that people gravitate toward. "There are a bunch of amazing weekly jams, some that have been going on for many years, and they all give musicians a venue to play together and get to know each other. This kind of music is made to be inclusive, and that's a beautiful thing."

— By Jason Schneider

**"It's all fiddle-based music, really."**

— Dara Weiss



All day Breakfast Stringband



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# Introducing The Blue Drop.

**T**he *Dictionary of Newfoundland English* defines 'blue drop' as "an area of open water in an ice-field". Such a space can be a welcome sight for ships making their way through the impenetrable pack ice that drifts past the island in early spring. Like that clear patch of water, The Blue Drop – singer Holly Hogan and singer/guitarist Allan Byrne – bring respite to the listener with tender, original songs, seamless harmonies, and clever, catchy guitar hooks.

"Holly is the writer," says Byrne. "I had written a few lyrics but it really wasn't my thing. By contrast I had a laptop full of tunes I had written that didn't have a home, so working with Holly was great because lyrics come easier for her, and when I have a theme or a feeling, I can match it with a melody. It works for us."

Byrne was born into one of Newfoundland's royal families of traditional music. His father Joe and uncle Pat released *Towards the Sunset* in 1983, an album often cited as one of the province's most influential musical works. His mother, Linda Slade, is a well-respected unaccompanied singer, and his brother Matthew Byrne sings with The Dardanelles. "I come from a family of pretty big voices," says Byrne. "Singing with Holly, it's the first time I've ever sung with a voice like hers before. It changes the way I sing live. I don't just belt it out anymore, although that's great, too, but there's a time and a place."

Hogan comes from a background of choral singing and has sung both harmony and lead with several Newfoundland jazz and folk acts over the years, including Mary Barry, Terry Reilly, and the Forgotten Bouzouki. She is married to the award-winning author Michael Crummey, who encouraged her to start writing songs. "Michael, and also our friend, writer Lisa Moore, asked me to read their work and give my opinion, so I think I just absorbed some of what makes for good writing versus crappy writing," she laughs. "I wrote a song and sent it to Michael. He was very encouraging. He said, 'There's some good stuff in here, I'd like to hear more about this or that,' but he never told me what to do or suggested any words, so I really felt the song was mine at the end."

"Allan took the song and changed the melody a bit but the arrangement really changed the way I sang it," says Hogan, "and that's how we became a songwriting team. If Allan wasn't the kind of person that he is, I would not have had the courage to show it to him. But I knew that if he didn't like it, he would be kind about it. I could trust him. That opened all kinds of doors."

With a musical partnership based on friendship and trust, Hogan and Byrne are moving forward and are beginning to collaborate on some songs with Michael Crummey. They have also recently finished a successful crowd-sourcing campaign to raise funds for their first CD. States Byrne, "It will be a huge relief to have it out there. When the songs are out in the world, they are not yours any more. That's going to be exciting for me and I'm looking forward to seeing how people react to it. I hope it goes over well."

– By Jean Hewson

**"I come from a family of pretty big voices."**

– Allan Byrne.



The Blue Drop: Allan Byrne and Holly Hogan



# Introducing Cassie & Maggie MacDonald



recordings, Cassie and Maggie MacDonald ensure that the true folk ways of their home community reaches the broader world.

Their debut album, *Fresh Heirs* (2011), was very much a grassroots project. They recorded it in the living room of their family home using the very same old upright piano that Maggie learned to play on. Overall, it was very much a tribute to the rich musical legacy of their family, as well as an introduction to a few of their own compositions.

With their latest release, *Sterling Road*, Cassie (fiddle and vocals) and Maggie (guitar, piano, keyboards, vocals) experiment with a bigger sound and more complex arrangements, to showcase how they had grown as composers and musicians. It includes four vocal tracks—representing the more prominent role singing plays in their live performances—and contributions from their multi-instrumentalist producer Andrew Collins.

Is it the energy of the coastal waters something that makes Eastern Canada so prolific for musical inspiration? “Ha-ha, that’s a wonderful question!” says Cassie. “We just came from showcasing at the North East Regional Folk Alliance conference, and there was a fantastic representation of Canadian artists, especially from the East Coast. The buzz around the conference was that there definitely must be something in our water that churns out an abnormal amount of musicians! All the musicians I know from the Maritimes have a deep and powerful connection to their roots, and the music seems to stem from the confidence in knowing where you came from and knowing that you have a story to tell, a legacy to uphold.”

For Cassie and Maggie, in particular, that legacy goes back to 1935. “Our grandfather, Hugh A. MacDonald, was a very prominent fiddler in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. He recorded several 78 LPs on the Celtic record label back in the ’30s. We were delighted to record one of his signature tunes, *The Starlight Waltz*, on the new CD. He recorded it almost 75 years ago!”

*Sterling Road* certainly stays delightfully in line with that tradition.

“We grew up listening to this music as a family. There was a fantastic radio program on the local Antigonish station that would come on every night at 6 p.m. and would play a straight hour of traditional fiddle music. I remember we would plan our days around that program so that we’d all be together to listen to the show. I would sit by the radio and play along to as many of the tunes as I could. We literally never stopped listening

to music, it was just part of our daily routine, as normal as breathing.”

The MacDonald sisters are currently touring *Sterling Road* across North America and are, obviously, delighted that their fiddle tunes, conceived in such a rich tradition, still resonate.

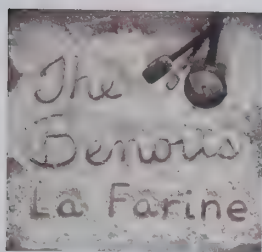
“We’re so lucky that Celtic music is embraced and loved by people all over the world,” Cassie says. “It’s a genre that really transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. We’re always pleasantly surprised when a new audience really responds to our music. I think the authenticity of what we’re doing really shines through and appeals to people, no matter their background.”

— By Dan St. Yves



Cassie and Maggie MacDonald





# Introducing The Benois

The Port au Port peninsula on Newfoundland's west coast has engendered some of the finest francophone musicians in the country, including fiddler Émile Benoit and accordionist Bernard Felix. The struggle to maintain a distinct society within another distinct society has not proved easy, however, and the older generation of French-speaking Newfoundlanders had to live through years of active repression of their language and heritage.

The activities of government and educational and religious facilities were all conducted in English, leading to widespread assimilation and a dying-off of indigenous Newfoundland French. But when fiddler Doug Benoit and his father, accordion player Mattis Benoit, founded their family band 20 years ago, the picture had changed. The establishment of francophone associations, French educational programs, and folk festivals such as Une Longue Veillée during the '70s, encouraged the celebration of French culture by both French and English speakers.

The core of The Benois has always been the father/son team of Doug and Mattis. Several members have come and gone but the current lineup also includes Doug's son, Devon, on drums and guitar, and his nephew, Shane Blanchard, on bass. While much of their material is French, they also cite Irish and Scottish influences.

"Dad played a lot of French music but he had a couple of friends, including an Irish doctor named Dr. McCann, who played accordion, so he started to play some of that," says Doug Benoit. "Myself, I guess I was influenced by Cape Breton music. Ivan White was a well-known, left-handed fiddler in Stephenville. I had just turned 14 and I was sick in bed one day, and Ivan came over with an album by Jerry Holland and played it for me. It was such a unique sound; I really wanted to play like that. I went into my room and drove my family nuts with the screeches and scratches while I was trying to learn," he laughs.

Two years ago, The Benois released their first CD. It was entitled *La Farine*, after a story told by Doug's grandmother, Florence Leprieur, about a ship that ran aground on a sand bar off the Port au Port Peninsula. "The only way they could get off the sand bar was to lighten the load and throw the flour overboard. The flour floated in to the community of Black Duck Brook. My grandmother retrieved 18 bags, so she got Émile Benoit to bring it to her house in his horse and cart."

The upbeat album of lively songs, stories, and tunes was very well received and resulted in invitations from festivals in Canada and France. Sadly, Mattis passed away in 2013 but the remaining members have decided to continue on, and often feel that Mattis is still with them.

"After dad passed, we had a gig in France with guitarist Duane Andrews, and I had mixed feelings about going," says Benoit. "Duane said, 'You should take this gig, it might do you some good,' so we went. I had learned one tune on the accordion from dad and I wanted to play that onstage in France because I knew dad would have appreciated that. I played it and got through it. Then I was supposed to pick up my fiddle but I kept the accordion instead, and played three tunes that I had never played on accordion before. Now, whenever I do play the accordion, my right hand is always cold. Papa's hands were cold when he played. Mine are always hot."

— By Jean Hewson



The Benois



# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

## CRITICS' FAVOURITE NEW DISCOVERIES OF 2014



### Albums of the Year for 2014

1. Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Independent)
2. Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (True North)
3. Còig, *Five* (Independent)
4. Roseanne Cash, *Long Gone Out West Blues* (Lula)  
The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk)
6. Lynne Hanson, *River Of Sand* (Independent)  
Lucinda Williams  
*Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone* (Highway 20)  
Jesse Winchester,  
*A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Applesseed)
9. Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North)  
The Duhks, *Beyond The Blue* (Compass)  
Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic From The Carleton* (Independent)  
Shovels & Rope, *Swinmin' Time* (Dualtone)

### New Discoveries for 2014

1. Còig
2. Parker Millsap
3. Sarah Jane Scouten

Amelia Curran, our critics favourite New Discovery in 2008, obviously fulfilled all of her early potential with the release of *They Promised You Mercy*. It was voted *Penguin Eggs* 13th annual Album of the Year by an assortment of more than 50 folk, roots and world music experts from across the country. It was close, though. Curran won by a single vote over Catherine MacLellan – herself a New Discovery winner in 2007.

Singer-songwriters clearly dominated this year's poll, with eight artists out of the Top 10 belonging in that category. And a Canadian, for the third year in a row, grabbed the brass ring.

While Còig, the traditional five-piece band from Cape Breton, placed third in the Album of the Year category, it came up trumps as this year's New Discovery top pick. But again, only one vote separated them from Parker Millsap, who just eked past Sarah Jane Scouten.

Jurors were asked to list their favourite 10 recordings released in 2013. Every nomination received one point. The winner gathered the most. For the New Discoveries category, we asked for three nominations.

A huge thanks to all who kindly participated. And a hearty congratulations to our winners. In the following pages, you can see how the judges voted. Now go out and discover all this wonderful music for yourself.

– Roddy Campbell

### Past Album of the Year Winners

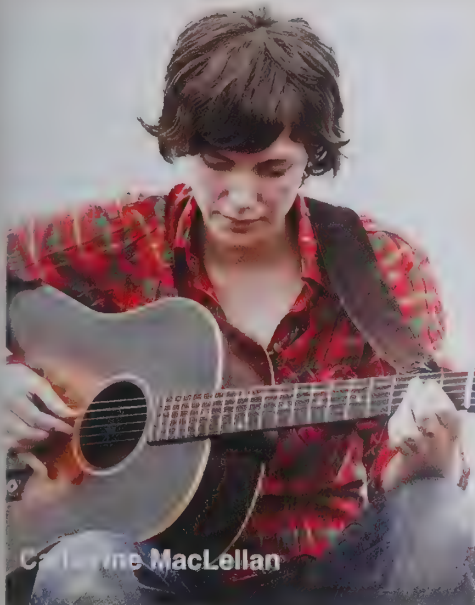
- 2013: David Francey, *So Say We All*, (Laker Music)  
 2012: Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music)  
 2011: Gillian Welch, *The Harrow & the Harvest* (Acrony)  
 2010: Lynn Miles, *Fall For Beauty* (True North Records)  
 2009: Jory Nash, *New Blue Day* (Independent)  
 2008: Fred Eaglesmith, *Tinderbox* (A Major Label)  
 2007: Alison Krauss & Robert Plant, *Raising Sand* (Rounder)  
 2006: Bob Dylan, *Modern Times* (Columbia)  
 2005: Lynn Miles, *Love Sweet Love* (True North)  
 2004: David Francey, *The Waking Hour* (Laker Music)  
 2003: David Francey, *Skating Rink* (Laker Music)  
 2002: Harry Manx, *Wise And Otherwise* (NorthernBluest)  
 2001: David Francey, *Far End of Summer* (Laker Music)

### Past New Discovery Winners

- 2013: Milk Carton Kids  
 2012: Cold Specks  
 2011: The Barr Brothers, Carrie Elkin, Pokey LaFarge, New Country Rehab  
 2010: The Once  
 2009: Kate Reid  
 2008: Amelia Curran  
 2007: Little Miss Higgins, Seth Lakeman, Catherine MacLellan  
 2006: Crooked Still  
 2005: Ridley Bent, House of Doc  
 2004: Fiamma Fumana  
 2003: Rae Spoon  
 2002: Ruthie Foster, Kathleen Edwards  
 2001: Harry Manx







**Clint Anderson:** Co-owner, Permanent Records, Edmonton: The Barr Brothers, *Sleeping Operator* (Secret City); Centro-Matic, *Take Pride In Your Long Odds* (Navigational); Drive-By Truckers, *English Oceans* (ATO); The Growlers, *Chinese Fountain* (Everloving); Marlaena Moore, *Beginner* (Independent); Chuck Prophet, *Night Surfer* (Yep Roc); Shovels & Rope, *Swimmin' Time* (Dualtone); Sturgill Simpson, *Matamodern Sounds In Country Music* (High Top Mountain); Tweedy, *Sukierae* (Anti-); Sharon Van Etten, *Are We There* (Jagjaguwar)

**New Discoveries:** Shakey Graves, Marlaena Moore, Sturgill Simpson

**Mike Barker:** Artistic director, Folk Under The Clock, Peterborough, ON.: Bajofondo, *Presente* (Masterworks); Còig, *Five* (Independent); Quique Escamilla, *500 Years of Night* (Independent); Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic at the Carleton* (Independent); Ana Moura, *Desfado* (Decca);

Robert Plant, *Lullaby & The Ceaseless Roar* (Nonesuch); Zachary Richard, *J'Aime La Vie* (Spectra Musique); Martin Simpson, *Vagrant Stanzas* (Topic); Ian Tamblyn, *The Labrador* (Independent); Ten Strings and a Goat Skin, *Corbeau* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Còig, The Punch Brothers, Ten Strings and a Goat Skin

**Yves Bernard:** Journalist, *Le Devoir*, radio host, CIBL-FM, CKIN-FM: Kiran Ahluwalia, *Sanata: Stillness* (Independent); Jean-François Bélanger, *Les vents orfèvres* (PHR); Briga, *Wake* (Independent); Le Bruit court dans la ville, *Les vents qui ventent* (Independent); Mamselle, *Maiz* (Independent); Mélisande (électrotrad), *Les métamorphoses* (La prûche libre); Sergiu Popa, *Tous en accord* (Independent); Shtreiml, *Eastern Hora* (Independent); Tango Boréal, *Pampa blues* (Atma Classique); Just Wôan, *Ikomo* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Bumaranga, Gypsy Kumbia Orchestra, Karim Dabo

**Allison Brock:** Host, *Widecut Country*, CKUA Radio Network: Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, *South* (File Under Music); Rosanne Cash, *The River & The Thread* (Blue Note); Rodney Crowell, *Tarpaper Sky* (New West); John Fullbright, *Songs* (Blue Dirt/Thirty Tigers); Braden Gates, *Ferris Wheel* (Independent); Lynne Hanson, *River Of Sand* (Independent); Parker Millsap, *Parker Millsap* (Oklahoma/Thirty Tigers); Zoe Muth, *World Of Strangers* (Signature Sounds); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Remedy* (ATO); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone* (Highway 20/Thirty Tigers)

**New Discoveries:** Kayla Hotte & Her Rodeo Pals, Sara Jean Kelley, Tin & The Toad

**Allison Brown:** Host of *Southern Ontario Comfort*, CHRW 94.9 fm, [www.chrwradio.ca](http://www.chrwradio.ca): Dan Belgue, *Tall Tales & Dusty Trails* (Independent); Crissi Cochrane, *Little Sway* (Independent); Chris Coole & Ivan Rosenberg, *Return To Trion* (Independent); Drive By Truckers, *English Oceans* (ATO); Ian Foster, *The Great Wave* (Independent); Samantha Martin & Delta Sugar, *Mississippi Sun* (Independent); Sarah Jane Scouten, *The Cape* (Independent); Henry Svec, *Artificially Intelligent Folk Songs Of Canada* (Independent); The Vaudevillian, *Salty Dog* (Independent); Tara Watts, *Pale Blue Moon* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Alex Charbonneau & The Heroin Hayride, Marina Marina, The O'Chays

**Roddy Campbell:** Editor and publisher, *Penguin Eggs*: 9Bach, *Tincian* (Real World); The Alt, *The Alt* (Under The Arch); Bette & Wallet, *Électrique* (Independent); Matthew Byrne, *hearts & heroes* (Independent); Steph Cameron, *Sad-eyed Lonesome Lady* (Pheromone); Còig, *Five* (Independent); Kacy & Clayton, *The Day Is Past & Gone* (Sask Music); Catherin MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Red June, *Ancient Dreams* (Organic); Sean Rowe, *Madman* (Anti-)

**New Discoveries:** Còig, Mandolin Orange, St. Paul and the Broken Bones

**Dave Carmichael:** Program co-ordinator, Deep Roots Music Festival, Wolfville, NS, <http://www.deeprootsmusic.ca/festival.php>: Matt Andersen, *Weightless* (True North); Bahamas, *Bahamas Is Afie* (Brushfire); The Barr Brothers, *Sleeping Operator* (Universal); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Jenn Grant, *Com-*





# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

*postela* (Outside); Hey Rosetta!, *Second Sight* (Sonic); The Hupman Brothers, *Black River Blues* (Independent); Gordie MacKeeman & His Rhythm Boys, *Pickin' N Clickin'* (Independent); The Modern Grass, *City Ghosts* (Mgmusic); Tanya Tagaq, *Animism* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** Kim Harris, Sin and Swoon, Carleton Stone

**Lark Clark:** Host/producer, *World Spinning*, CKUA Radio Network: Kiran Ahluwalia, *Sanata: Stillness* (Magenta); Tony Allen, *Film of Life* (Harmonia Mundi); Alsarah and the Nubatones, *Silt* (Wonderwheel Recordings); Aurelio, *Landini* (Real World); Diego el Cigala, *Vuelve El Flamenco* (Cigala Music); Julie Fowlis, *Gach Sgeul/Every Story* (Machair); Marco Claveria Project, *Origins* (Independent); Salsa Celtica, *The Tall Islands* (Discos Leon); Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, *Libation* (Cumbancha); Sinead O'Connor, *I'm Not Bossy, I'm The Boss* (Nettwerk)

**New Discoveries:** Alsarah and the Nubatones, MENAME Middle Eastern & North African Music Ensemble (of Edmonton)

**Tanya Corbin:** Communications manager/vendor relations, Edmonton Folk Music Festival: Còig, *Five*, (Independent); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Kris Delmhurst, *Blood Test* (Signature); Ben and Helen Harper, *Childhood Home* (Prestige Folklife); Hooray for the Riff Raff, *Small Town Heroes* (ATO); Hozier, *Hozier* (Island); Parker Millsap, *Parker Millsap* (Oklahoma); Oh Susanna, *Name Dropper* (Sonic Unyon); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Passenger, *All The Little Lights* (Nettwerk)

**New Discoveries:** Bear's Den, The Mae

Trio, Parker Millsap

**Doug Cox:** AD and musician, Vancouver Island MusicFest, Courtenay, BC: Bros. Landreth, *Let It Lie* (Independent); Jackson Browne, *Standing In the Breach* (Warner); Bob Carpenter, *Silent Passage Reissue* (No Quarter); David Crosby, *Croz* (Blue Castle); Mary Flower, *When My Bluebird Sings* (Bluesette); The Haden Triplets, *The Haden Triplets* (Third Man); Oliver Mtukudzi, *Mukombe We Mvura* (Sheer Sound); Eva Quartet and Hector Zazou, *The Arch* (Elen Music); Toure-Raichel Collective, *The Paris Session* (Cumbancha); David Vest, *Roadhouse Revelation* (Cordova Bay)

**New Discoveries:** Peace, love, and understanding

**Tom Coxworth:** Host/producer, *Folk Routes*, CKUA Radio Network: Steph Cameron, *Sad-eyed Lonesome Lady* (Pheromone); Bob Carpenter, *Silent Passage* (No Quarter); Sam Carter, *The No Testament* (Captain); Fearing & White, *Tea & Confidences* (Lowden Proud); Mary Gauthier, *Trouble & Love* (Six Shooter); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Peggy Seeger, *Everything Changes* (Signet); Smoke Fairies, *Blood Speaks* (Year Seven); Various artists, *The Elizabethan Session* (Folk by the Oak); Wilson & Swarbrick, *Lion Rampart* (Shirty)

**New Discoveries:** Spencer Burton, JP Hoe, Kacy & Clayton

**Ian Davies:** Artistic director, Acoustic Muse Concerts & Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club, London, ON: Bellowhead, *Revival* (Island); Carlene Carter, *Carter Girl* (Universal); Kleztory, *Arrival* (Amerix); Habib Koité, *Soô* (Contre Jour); Allison

Lupton, *Half My Heart* (Learig); Carlos Nunez, *Inter-Celtic* (RCA); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Runa, *Current Affairs* (Independent); Wilson & Swarbrick, *Lion Rampant* (Shirty); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Appleseed)

**New Discoveries:** Abavuki, Le Bal a L'Huile, Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar

**Andy Donnelly:** Host, *The Celtic Show*, www.ckua.com: Baka Beyond, *After The Tempest* (March Hare Music); Bob Carpenter, *Silent Passage* (No Quarter); Bruce and Walker, *Born To Rottenrow* (Greentrax); Griener Coppins, *The Prince That Nobody Knows* (Independent); Alasdair Fraser and Natalie Haas, *Abundance* (Culburnie); Lizzy Hoyt, *New Lady On The Prairie* (Independent); Alex Hodgson, *The Brig Tae Nae Where* (Greentrax); Lynched, *Cold Old Fire* (Independent); Adrian Nation, *Live At Crossroads* (Laburnum Bridge); Garnet Rodgers, *Summer's End* (Snow Goose Songs)

**New Discoveries:** Lynched, Adrian Nation, Hudson Taylor

**Craig Dunsmuir:** Buyer/assistant manager, Soundscapes, Toronto: Les Ambassadeurs Du Motel De Bamako, *Les Ambassadeurs Du Motel De Bamako* (Sterns); Sam Amidon, *Lily-O* (Nonesuch); Jennifer Castle, *Pink City* (Idée Fixe); Gilberto Gil, *Gilbertos Samba* (Sony Brazil); Ernie Graham, *Ernie Graham* (4 Men With Beards); Ngozi Family, *Day Of Judgment* (Now-Again); Sid Selvidge, *The Cold Of The Morning* (Omnivore); John Southworth, *Niagara* (Tin Angel); VA, *Country Funk II: 1967-1974* (Light In The Attic); The Weather Station, *What Am I Going To Do With Everything I Know* (You've Changed)

**New Discoveries:** Courtney Barnett,





Melanie De Biasio, Dylan Shearer

**Steve Edge:** Artistic director, Rogue Folk Club, Vancouver, BC, (, host of *The Edge On Folk*, CiTR FM 101.9: Bellowhead, *Revival* (Navigator); Rosanne Cash, *The River & The Thread* (Universal); Còig, *Five* (Independent); The Gloaming, *The Gloaming* (Realworld); Nancy Kerr, *Sweet Visitor* (Little Dish); Oysterband, *Diamonds on the Water* (Navigator); Colleen Rennison, *See The Sky About To Rain* (Black Hen); Chris Smither, *Still on the Levee* (Signature Sounds); Tinariwen, *Emmaar* (Wedge); Toumani & Sidiki Diabate, *Toumani & Sidiki* (World Circuit)

**New Discoveries:** Birds of Chicago, *Harp & A Monkey*, Moustafa Kouyate & Romain Malagnoux

**Bill Garrett:** Musician, producer, partner in Borealis Records: Rosanne Cash, *The River And The Thread* (Blue Note); Guy Clark, *My Favorite Picture Of You* (Dual-tone); The Fretless, *The Fretless* (Independent); Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic From The Carleton* (Independent); James Hill, *The Old Silo* (Borealis); Mark Knopfler, *Privateering* (Mercury); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Tony McManus, *Mysterious Boundaries* (Compass); Shari Ulrich, *Everywhere I Go* (Borealis); Sarah Jane Scouten, *The Cape* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** The Bombadils, *Còig*, Sarah Jane Scouten

**Barry Hammond:** Freelance reviewer, *Penguin Eggs*: Mike Auldridge, Rob Ickes & Jerry Douglas, *Three Bells* (Universal); Chatham County Line, *Tightrope* (Yep Roc); Leonard Cohen, *Popular Problems*

(Sony); Jerry Douglas, *The Earls of Leicester* (Universal); Easton Stagger Phillips, *Resolution Road* (Rebel Tone), Keb' Mo', *Bluesamericana* (Kind of Blue); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Remedy* (Nettwerk); Jen Starsinic, *The Flood and the Fire* (Dangerous You); Willie Watson, *Folk Singer Volume 1* (Acony); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone* (Sony)

**New Discoveries:** The Early Mays, Allison Lupton, Jen Starsinic

**Cam Hayden:** Producer, Edmonton Blues Festival; announcer/producer, CKUA Radio Network; talent buyer, Blues at the Bow: Jim Byrne, *St. Louis Blues* (Black Hen); Morgan Davis, *I Got My Own* (Electro-Fi); Steve Dawson, *Rattlesnake Cage* (Black Hen); Fathead, *Fatter Than Ever* (Independent); Angel Forrest with Paul Delauriers and Denis Coulombe, *Live Love* (Morningstar); JW Jones, *Belmont Boulevard* (Blind Pig); Harrison Kennedy, *This Is From Here* (Electro-Fi); Big Dave McLean, *Faded But Not Gone* (Black Hen); Raoul and the Big Time, *Hollywood Blvd.* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whiteley, Fathead, Joel Johnson

**Glen Herbert:** Writer/editor, Burlington, ON: Darol Anger, *E-and'a* (Adventure Music); The Henry Girls, *Louder than Words* (Independent); Hot Rize, *When I'm Free* (Ten in Hand); I Draw Slow, *White Wave Chapel* (Pinecastle); Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge, *Avalon* (Modern Lore); The Railsplitters, *The Railsplitters* (Independent); Red June, *Ancient Dreams* (Organic); Chris Smither, *Still on the Levee* (Signature Sounds); Brendan Taafe and the New Line, *Can't Hold the Wheel* (Independent); Willie Watson, *Folk Singer Vol. 1* (Acony)

**New Discoveries:** Red June, Julian Lage, Brendan Taafe and the New Line

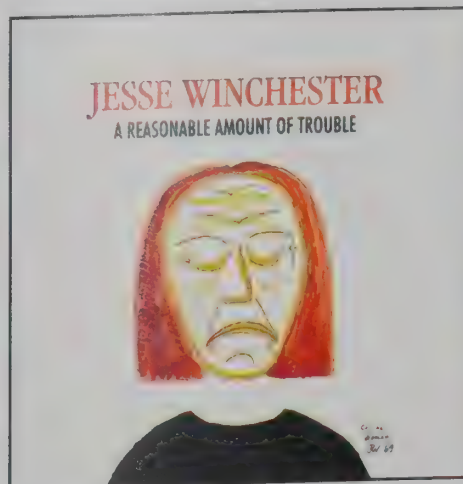
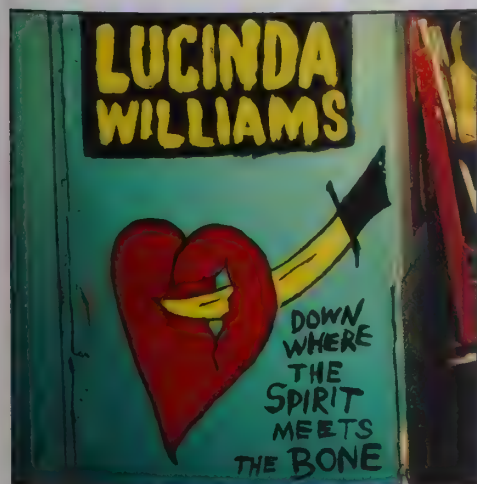
**Mike Hill:** Artistic director, Mariposa Folk Festival, Orillia, ON: Adam Cohen, *We Go Home* (AC Northern Holdings); Amelia Curran, *Let the Storm Come* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (True North); Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North); Doug Paisley, *Strong Feelings* (Independent); Jackson Browne, *Standing in the Breach* (Inside Recordings); James Hill, *The Old Silo* (Borealis); Neil Young, *A Letter Home* (Reprise); Richard Thompson, *Acoustic Classics* (Beeswing Records); Royal Wood, *The Burning Bright* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Ash & Bloom, Bobby Bazini, Scott Cook

**Geoffrey Kelly:** Musician/Spirit of the West/Paperboys/Irish Rovers: Gregg Allman, *All My Friends* (Rounder); Mike Farris, *Shine For All The People* (Compass); Fish & Bird, *Something In The Ether* (Fiddle Head Records); Ed Harcourt, *Time Of Dust* (EP) (CCCLX Music); Joe Henry, *Invisible Hour* (Work Song); Ben Howard, *I Forget Where We Were* (Island); Dougie MacLean, *Till Tomorrow with Royal Scottish National Orchestra* (Linn); Paolo Nutini, *Caustic Love* (Atlantic); John Smith, *Great Lakes* (BARP LTD); We Banjo Three, *Gather The Good* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Nordic, The Old Dance School, Matheu Watson

**Patrick Langston:** Freelance arts writer, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Penguin Eggs*, others: The Barr Brothers, *Sleeping Operator* (Secret City); Martin Carthy & Eliza Carthy, *The Moral of the Elephant* (Topic); Elvis





Costello et al, *Lost on the River: The New Basement Tapes* (Electromagnetic/Harvest); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Mary Gauthier, *Trouble & Love* (Six Shooter); Lynne Hanson, *River of Sand* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Tanya Tagaq, *Anamism* (Six Shooter); Richard Thompson, *Acoustic Classics* (Beeswing); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone* (Highway 20)

**New Discoveries:** The Brothers Landreth, Parsonfield (formerly Poor Old Shine); Shovels & Rope

**Roger Levesque:** Writer/broadcaster, *Penguin Eggs*, *Edmonton Journal*: Ray Bonneville, *Easy Gone* (Red House); Diana Braithwaite & Chris Whiteley, *Blues Stories* (Big City Blues); Basia Bulat, *Tall Tall Shadow* (Secret City); Steve Dawson, *Rattlesnake Cage* (Black Hen); Karim Gillani, *The Path Of Love* (Independent); The Harpoonist & The Axe Murderer, *A Real Fine Mess* (Independent); James Hill, *The Old Silo* (Borealis); Jayme Stone, *The Other Side Of The Air* (Independent); Tanya Tagaq, *Animism* (Six Shooter); Toure-Raichel Collective, *The Paris Session* (Cum-bancha)

**New Discoveries:** De Temps Antan, *Lost Bayou Ramblers*, Dana Wylie

**Scott Lingley:** Freelance writer: Tony Allen, *Film of Life* (Jazz Village); Barr Brothers, *Sleeping Operator* (Secret City); Budos Band, *Burnt Offering* (Daptone); Fish & Bird, *Somewhere in the Ether* (Fiddlehead); Marisa Nadler, *July* (Sacred Bones); Aby Ngana Diop, *Liital* (Awesome Tapes from Africa); Sturgill Simpson, *Metamodern Sounds in Country Music*

(High Top Mountain); Sun Kil Moon, *Benji* (Caldo Verde); Richard Thompson, *Acoustic Classics* (Beeswing); Tinariwen, *Emmaar* (Outside)

**New Discoveries:** Amen Dunes, Marisa Nadler, Sturgill Simpson

**Sandy MacDonald:** Freelance music writer, *Penguins Eggs*, Halifax: Basia Bulat, *Tall Tall Shadow* (Secret Shadow); Còig, *Five* (Independent); David Francey, *So Say We All* (Laker/Outside); Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic at the Carleton* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Poor Angus, *Gathering* (Fogarty's Cove); Shovels and Rope, *Swimmin' Time* (Dualtone); Strumbellas, *We Still Move On Dance Floors* (Six Shooter); Sturgill Simpson, *Metamodern Sounds in Country Music* (Loose Music); Various artists, *Link of Chain (A Songwriters' Tribute to Chris Smither)* (Signature Sounds)

**New Discoveries:** Bend The River, Crooked Brothers, Wooden Wand (James Toth)

**Jana Mackenzie:** Artistic director, South Country Fair: Linda McRae, *50 Shades of Red* (Borealis); Quique Escamilla, *500 Years of Night* (Luluworld); Jenn Grant, *Compostela* (Outside); The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer, *A Real Fine Mess* (Tonic); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter)

**Gillian Moranz:** East Stage artistic director, South Country Fair: The Crooked Brothers, *Thank You I'm Sorry* (Independent); David Newberry, *Slow* (Independent); The Dead South, *Good Company* (Independent); Sarah Jane Scouten, *The Cape* (Independent); Joe Nolan, *Tornado*

(Six Shooter)

**Trent's New Discoveries of the Year:** Martyn Bennett, Wizz Jones, Tristan Seume

**Jim Marino:** Host: *Freewheeling Spotlight Show*; *Freewheeling Folk Show & Smokin' Bluegrass Show*, 93.3 CFMU, Hamilton, ON, AD/host; *Freewheelin Concert Series*, Hamilton/Dundas, ON: Ash and Bloom, *Let The Storm Come* (Independent); Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North); Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, *South* (FU:M); The Dinner Belles, *The River and The Willow* (Sonic Unyon); Fearing and White, *Tea and Confidences* (LowdenProud); Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic at The Carleton* (Gallant Effort); Lynne Hanson, *River of Sand* (Independent); Allison Lupton, *Half My Heart* (Independent); Linda McRae, *Fifty Shades of Red* (Borealis); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Appleseed)

**New Discoveries:** Matthew Barber, Gathering Sparks, Ginger St. James and The Grinders

**David McPherson:** Freelance music writer, communications consultant: Matt Anderson, *Weightless* (True North); Bahamas, *Bahamas is Afe* (Brushfire); Rodney Crowell, *Tarpaper Sky* (New West); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); The Devil Makes Three, *I'm a Stranger Here* (New West); Jadea Kelly, *Clover* (True North); Old 97s, *Most Messed Up* (ATO); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Shovels & Rope, *Swimmin' Time* (Dualtone); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone* (Highway 20)

**New Discoveries:** Denver, Alana Gurr, Tanya Tagaq





**Ian Menzies:** President, Menzies Mixed Media Consulting. Mobile recording manager and special projects, Calgary Folk Music Festival: Kiran Ahluwalia, *Sanata: Stillness* (Magenta/eOne); Bahamas, *Bahamas is Afie* (Brushfire); Jim Byrnes, *St. Louis Times* (Black Hen); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Mercan Dede, *Dunya* (One Earth); Eccodek, *Singing in Tongues* (Black Swan); The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer, *A Real Fine Mess* (Tonic); 9Bach, *Tincain* (Realworld); Noura Mint Seymali, *Tzeni* (Glitterbeat); Oh Susanna, *Name Dropper* (Sonic Unyon)

**New Discoveries:** Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer, 9Bach, Noura Mint Semali

**Julie Miller:** Radio host, *Ouvrez les Frontières*, CFLX Sherbrooke, QC, and *The Covered Bridge*, CIDI Knowlton, QC: Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Michel Faubert, *Mémoire maudite* (La Tribu); Fish & Bird, *Something in the Ether* (Fiddle Head); James Hill, *The Old Silo* (Borealis); David Marin, *Le choix de l'embarras* (Simone); Patrice Michaud, *Le feu de chaque jour* (Spectra); The Touré-Raichel Collective, *The Paris Session* (Cumbancha); Jason Tyler-Burton, *Headwaters* (Independent); Shari Ulrich, *Everywhere I Go* (Borealis)

**New Discoveries:** Còig, Les Hay Babies, Flavia Nascimento

**Monica Miller:** Host/producer, *How I Hear It*, CKUA Radio Network: Tony Allen, *Film of Life* (Jazz Village); Rosanne Cash, *The River & The Thread* (Blue Note); Marco Claveria Project, *Origins* (Independent); Amelia Curran, *They Promised*

*You Mercy* (Six Shooter); Jenn Grant, *Compostela* (Outside); Joe Henry, *Invisible Hour* (Work Song); Doug Paisley, *Strong Feelings* (Warner); Owen Pallett, *In Conflict* (Secret City); Sean Rowe, *Madman* (Anti-); The Souljazz Orchestra, *Inner Fire* (Strut)

**New Discoveries:** Steph Cameron, Lodom Ensemble, Parker Millsap

**Tony Montague:** Music and performing arts freelance writer, Vancouver: Aurelio, *Landini* (Stonetree/Real World); Steve Dawson, *Rattlesnake Age* (Black Hen); Bob Dylan, *The Basement Tapes Complete* (Columbia (Legacy)); The Gloaming, *The Gloaming* (Justin Time); Kyriacos Kalaitzidis, *The Musical Voyages of Marco Polo* (World Village); Moustapha Kouyaté and Romain Malagnoux, *Les Frontières Imaginaires* (Disques Nuits d'Afrique); Anaïs Mitchell, *xoa* (Wilderland); Coleen Rennison, *See the Sky About to Rain* (Black Hen); Chris Smither, *Still on the Levee* (Signature Sounds); The Touré-Raichel Collective, *The Paris Session* (Cumbancha)

**New Discoveries:** Quinn Bachard, The Gloaming, Coleen Rennison

**Tom Murray:** Music writer, *Edmonton Journal*: Bob Dylan & the Band, *Bootleg Series Vol. II* (Columbia); Felice Brothers, *Favorite Waitress* (Dualtone); Mary Gauthier, *Trouble and Love* (Six Shooter); How Gelb, *A Little Sand Box* (Fire); Bry Webb, *Free Will* (Idée Fixe); Lynne Hanson, *River of Sand* (Independent); Eddi Reader, *Vagabond* (Reveal); Willie Watson, *Folk Singer Vol. I* (Acony); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone* (Highway 20); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Appleseed)

**New Discoveries:** Lynne Hanson, Kacy & Clayton, Jessica Pratt

**Caitlin North:** Professional programming presenter, Arden Theatre, St. Albert, AB: Ryan Adams, *Ryan Adams* (Pax-Am); Jackson Browne, *Standing in the Breach* (Inside); Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter); The Duhks, *Beyond the Blue* (Compass); The Fretless, *The Fretless* (Independent); Hot Rize, *When I'm Free* (Ten in Hand); Lori McKenna, *Numbered Doors* (Hoodie Songs); Parker Millsap, *Parker Millsap* (Okrahoma); Doug Paisley, *Strong Feelings* (No Quarter);

Tweedy, *Sukierae* (Anti-)

**New Discoveries:** DUGAS, The Fretless, Parker Millsap

**Rob Oakie:** Executive director, Music PEI: Còig, *Five* (Independent); David Crosby, *Croz* (Blue Castle); The Duhks, *Beyond the Blue* (Compass); The East Pointers, *The East Pointers* (Independent); The Elizabethan Session, *The Elizabethan Session* (Quercus); The Gloaming, *The Gloaming* (Real World); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Maz, *Chasse-Galerie* (Bleu); Nickel Creek, *A Dotted Line* (Nonesuch); John Smith, *Great Lakes* (BARP Ltd)

**New Discoveries:** Kizzy Crawford, The East Pointers, Martin Harley

**John Prentice:** *Planet Mainstage* (101.5 UMFH): Baka Beyond, *After the Tempest* (March Hare); Mark Berube, *Russian Dolls* (Bonsound); The Bros. Landreth, *Let It Lie* (Independent); The Duhks, *Beyond the Blue* (Compass); Fearing and White, *Tea and Confidences* (LowdenProud); John Mann, *The Waiting Room* (Independent); Pacifika, *Amor Planeta* (Six Degrees); Jess Reimer, *The Nightjar and the Garden* (Pipe & Hat); Donné Roberts, *Internation* (Independent); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Appleseed)

**New Discoveries:** The Lemon Bucket Orkestra, Hannah Shirah Naiman, Ross and Jarlath

**Steve Pritchard:** Host/producer, *The Radio Boogie*, CIUT www.ciut.fm: The All Day Breakfast Stringband, *Shanghai* (Independent); Annie Lou, *Tired and True* (Independent); Ball and Chain and The Wreckers, *Surrender* (Independent);





# ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

Big Tobacco and The Pickers, *Time Ain't On Your Side* (Independent); Matthew Byrnes, *Hearts and Heros* (Independent); The Duhks, *Beyond The Blue* (Compass); The Lonesome Ace Stringband, *Old Tyme Music* (Independent); Ivan Rosenberg and Chris Coole, *Return To Trion* (Vole-o-Tone); Sarah Jane Scouten, *The Cape* (Independent); The Spinney Brothers, *Tired And True* (Mountain Fever)

**New Discoveries:** The All Day Breakfast Stringband, Sarah Hamilton, Sarah Jane Scouten

**Tim Readman:** Guitarist, singer, songwriter, producer and Celtic Fest Vancouver's artistic adviser: 9Bach, *Tincian* (Real World); Beoga, *Live At 10: The 10th Anniversary Concert* (Compass); Martin Carthy and Eliza Carthy, *The Moral of the Elephant* (Topic); Duncan Chisholm, *Live at Celtic Connections* (Copperfish); Còig, *Five* (Independent); Éamonn Coyne and Kris Drever, *Story Map* (Compass); The Fretless, *Fretless* (Independent); The Log Drivers, *The Log Drivers* (Independent); Nua, *Bold* (Independent); Pádraig Rynne, *Notify* (Liosbeg)

**New Discoveries:** Ross Ainslie and Jarlath Henderson, 9Bach, Còig

**Mike Regenstreif:** Journalist, blogger: Eric Bibb, *Blues People* (Stony Plain); Jon Brooks, *The Smiling & Beautiful Countryside* (Borealis); Leonard Cohen, *Popular*

*Problems* (Columbia); Bob Dylan, *The Basement Tapes Complete: The Bootleg Series Vol. 11* (Columbia/Legacy); Anne Hills, *Tracks* (Hand & Heart Music); Garnet Rogers, *Summer's End* (Snow Goose); Tom Russell, *Midway to Bayamon* (Frontera); Dave Van Ronk, *Live in Monterey* (Omnivore); Various artists, *Dear Jean: Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie* (Compass); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount of Trouble* (Appleseed)

**New Discoveries:** Leyla McCalla, Hannah Shira Naiman, Colleen Rennison

**Jeff Robson:** Host, *Tell the Band To Go Home*, [www.tellthebandtogohome.com](http://www.tellthebandtogohome.com), and *Steel Belted Radio*, CJUM 101.5 UMFM, Winnipeg: Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North); Buck 65, *Neverlove* (Warner); Easton Stagger Phillips, *Resolution Road* (Independent); Radney Foster, *Everything I Should Have Said* (Devil's River); Jon Dee Graham, *Do Not Forget* (Independent); Jimmer, *The Would Be Plans* (The Chief Injustice); Shannon Lyon, *The Lights Behind* (Busted Flat); Sean Rowe, *Madman* (Anti-); Matthew Ryan, *Boxers* (Independent); Sunparlour Players, *The Living Proof* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Joe Nolan, *Slow Leaves*, The 24th Street Wailers

**Mike Sadava:** Freelance journalist and musician: Elephant Revival, *These Changing Skies* (Independent); Front Country, *For*

*the Sake of the Sound* (Independent); Terry Gillespie, *Bluesoul* (Independent); James Hill, *The Old Silo* (Borealis); Si Kahn and the Lopping Brothers, *Aragon Mill* (Strictly Country); Lowell Levinger, *Down to the Roots* (Grandpa Raccoon); Milk Carton Kids, *The Ash and Clay* (Anti-); Modern Grass, *City Ghosts* (Independent); Conrad Walz, *She Comes and Goes* (Independent); Dana Wylie, *The Sea and the Sky* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Chris Ronald, Sarah Jane Scouten, Jeff Scroggins and Colorado

**Jason Schneider:** A jack of all trades in the Canadian music industry and the author of several books including *Whispering Pines: The Northern Roots of American Music from Hank Snow to The Band* (ECW Press); Drive-By Truckers, *English Oceans* (ATO); Gary Clark Jr., *Live* (Warner); Mary Gauthier, *Trouble & Love* (Six Shooter); Hurray For The Riff Raff, *Small Town Heroes* (ATO); Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings, *Give The People What They Want* (Daptone); Miranda Mulholland, *Whipping Boy* (Roaring Girl); Old 97's, *Most Messed Up* (ATO); Jess Reimer, *The Nightjar and The Garden* (Pipe & Hat); Naomi Shelton & The Gospel Queens, *Cold World* (Daptone); Jack White, *Lazaretto* (Sony)

**New Discoveries:** Benjamin Booker, Steve Parkinson & the Stony Lonesome, Jess Reimer



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**Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015**

**Jill Barber**  
**Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015**

**Bettye LaVette**  
with The Walkervilles  
**Friday, Feb. 20, 2015**

**Alejandra Ribera**  
**Thursday, Feb. 26, 2015**

**Jake Shimabuku**  
**Friday, March 6, 2015**

**Preservation Hall Jazz Band**  
**Sunday, March 8, 2015**

**Mo Kenney**  
**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

**Steven Page**  
with Kevin Fox  
**Friday, April 10, 2015**

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**Iles siemieniuk:** Radio guy, proud board member of Home Routes, *Penguin Eggs* contributor: Del Barbour, *Prairieography* (True North); Roseanne Cash, *The River and the Thread* (Blue Note); John Mann, *The Waiting Room* (Independent); Parker Millsap, *Parker Millsap* (Oklahoma); Oh Susanna, *Name Dropper* (Sonic Unyon); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Rueben and the Dark, *Funeral Sky* (Arts and Crafts); Shovels and Rope, *Swimmin' Time* (Dualtone); Moira Smiley and Voco, *Out of Tears Out of Laughter* (Independent); Bruce Springsteen, *High Hopes* (Columbia)

**New Discoveries:** Parker Millsap, Shovels and Rope, Holly Williams

**Lyle Skinner:** Host, *Prairie Ceilidh*, CKJS Radio 810, Winnipeg, MB, and *Waxies Dargle* CJUM/UMFM 101.5, Winnipeg, MB: Matthew Byrne, *Hearts & Heroes* (Independent); Còig, *Five* (Independent); Cara Dillon, *A Thousand Hearts* (Charcoal); The Duhks, *Beyond The Blue* (Compass); Matt & Shannon Heaton, *Tell You In Earnest* (Independent); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Oysterband, *Diamonds On The Water* (Navigator); Runa, *Current Affairs* (Independent); Kate Rusby, *Ghost* (Pure); Emily Smith, *Echoes* (White Fall)

**New Discoveries:** Lizzy Hoyt, Maz O'Connor, Salt House

**Brenda Tacik:** Host, *Deeper Well*, CJTR, Regina Community Radio, Regina, SK: Joe Crookston, *Georgia, I'm Here* (Independent); Mark Erelli, *Milltowns* (Independent); Lynne Hanson, *River of Sand* (CRS); Hooray for the Riff Raff, *Home Town*

*Heroes* (ATO); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (Independent); Cahalen Morrison and Eli West, *I'll Swing My Hammer with Both My Hands* (Independent); Red Molly, *The Red Album* (Independent); Chris Smither, *Still on the Levee* (Signature Sounds); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); The Stray Birds, *Best Medicine* (Yep Roc)

**New Discoveries:** Colleen Rennison, Nichol Robertson, Shinyribs

**Eric Thom:** Music writer, Toronto: Hannah Aldridge, *Razor Wire* (Trodden Black); Sugar Brown, *Sugar Brown's Sad Day* (Independent); Kat Danser, *Baptized By The Mud* (Outside); Durham County Poets, *Chikkaboodah Stew* (Independent); Mark Harrison, *The World Outside* (Independent); Lynne Hanson, *River of Sand* (Independent); Jane Lewis, *Stay With Me* (Independent); David Olney, *When The Deal Goes Down* (Deadbeet); Steve Strongman, *Let Me Prove It To You* (Independent); Dulcie Taylor, *Only Worn One Time* (Independent)

**New Discoveries:** Chris Culgin, Durham County Poets, Gathering Sparks

**Greg Torrington:** Roots music programmer for Stingray Music (formerly Galaxie) Canada and U.S.: Del Barber, *Prairieography* (True North); Elvin Bishop, *Can't Even Do Wrong Right* (Alligator); Irene Kelley, *Pennsylvania Coal* (Patio); Lake Street Dive, *Bad Self Portraits* (Signature); Nickel Creek, *A Dotted Line* (Nonesuch); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Remedy* (ATO); The Once, *Departures* (Nettwerk); Shovels & Rope, *Swimmin' Time* (Dualtone); The Stray Birds, *Best Medicine* (Yep Roc); Richard Thompson, *Acoustic Classics* (Beeswing)

**New Discoveries:** Steph Cameron, The Haden Triplets, Sin & Swoon

**Jan Vanderhorst:** Host, *Just Us Folk*, Country 1380, Brantford, ON/100.7 The Breeze, Winnipeg, MN: Matt Andersen, *Weightless* (True North); Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, *South* (FU:Music); Rosanne Cash, *The River and the Thread* (Blue Note); Lennie Gallant, *Live Acoustic at the Carleton* (Independent); John Gorka, *Bright Side Of Down* (Red House); Jane Lewis, *Stay With Me* (Independent); Allison Lupton, *Half My Heart* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *The Raven's Sun* (In-

dependent); Garnet Rogers, *Summer's End* (Independent); Jesse Winchester, *A Reasonable Amount Of Trouble* (Appleseed)

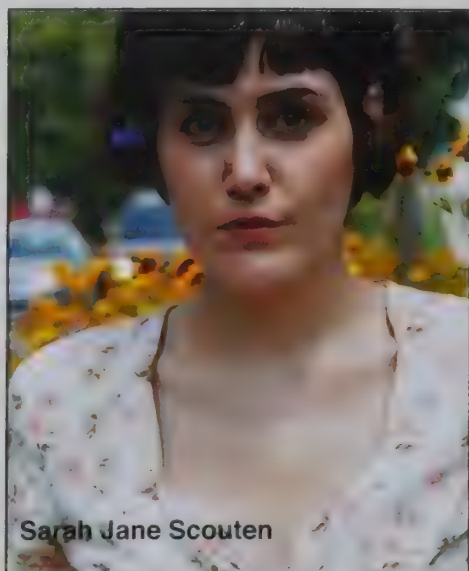
**New Discoveries:** De Temps Antan, Sprag Session, The Sweet Lowdown

**Eric Volmers:** Music writer, *Calgary Herald*: Jill Barber, *Fool's Gold* (Outside Music); Rosanne Cash, *The River and the Thread* (Blue Note); John Hiatt, *Terms of My Surrender* (New West); Jolie Holland, *Wine Dark Sea* (Anti-); Hurray for the Riff Raff, *Small Town Heroes* (ATO); Jenny Lewis, *The Voyager* (Warner Bros.); Lydia Loveless, *Somewhere Else* (Bloodshot); Old 97's, *Most Messed Up* (ATO); Sharon Van Etten, *We Are There* (Jagjaguwar); Lucinda Williams, *Down Where the Spirit Meets the Bone* (Highway 20)

**New Discoveries:** AroarA, Moonface, Thus Owls

**Michael (A Man Called) Wrycraft:** Album designer, festival emcee, concert curator: Bette et Wallet, *Electricque* (Independent); Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, *South* (F:UM); Jon Brooks, *The Smiling And Beautiful Countryside* (Borealis); Darlene, *Curves Ahead* (Independent); Cara Dillon, *A Thousand Hearts* (Sony UK); James Keelaghan, *History: The First 25 Years* (Borealis); Linda McRae, *50 Shades Of Red* (Borealis); Harlan Pepper, *Take Out A Twenty & Live Life To The Fullest* (Independent); Jayme Stone, *The Other Side of The Air* (Independent); Tanya Tagaq, *Animism* (Six Shooter)

**New Discoveries:** Kristen Bussandri, The Oh Chays, Annie Sumi



Sarah Jane Scouten



# Tubthumping

Renowned banjo virtuosos combine their immense talents to record an album of duets.

By Glen Herbert

## Abigail Washburn & Bela Fleck

When I first heard that Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn had married I thought it was a joke, though that was in part because of the source of the news. The *Bluegrass Intelligencer*, a satire web magazine, ran the story under the headline “Strategic marriage will consolidate power within single banjo sovereignty”. A faux-anonymous source close to the couple is quoted as saying that the future bride and groom “barely detest each other at all”.

Of course, the article was meant in fun even if there was a bit of truth behind it. Which, as it turns out, there was. Fleck and Washburn had, in fact, married—they’ve also since had a son, Juno, born last year—yet it still felt like someone was pulling our legs. As musicians, they have often appeared to be singing from different hymnals, so to speak.

Fleck is known, rightly, for a very complex, heady approach to the banjo, one based in the kind of precision that we associate more with classical musicians. Often it works astonishingly well, and is one of the reasons that he has drawn so many to a renewed appreciation of his instrument.

Washburn, while not as technically robust—and who, as an old-time musician, doesn’t improvise, something that Fleck has built his career around—nevertheless brings a rich, immersive emotion to everything she does. She crept into the Americana mainstream through old-time music, rising to our attention as a member of Uncle Earl, a group in which she demonstrated her ability as a singer and banjo player as well as her willingness to take risks in

the service of reaching an audience.

During sets with Uncle Earl she’d include a song in Mandarin. Because many in the audiences in those days didn’t know that she speaks Mandarin fluently and has served as a cultural ambassador between China and the U.S., the idea, when first presented, felt put on, or showy, or just ill advised. But then she showed us why it wasn’t, regularly bringing audiences to their feet. The emotion, and the power in her voice, was captivating and moving. Where Fleck encourages us to come to him, Washburn works doggedly to reach out to us.

That contrast animates their first album of duets released this past October, titled *Bela Fleck and Abigail Washburn*. On one hand, it’s simply a question of technical approach. Says Fleck, “I tend to push and play on the front end of the beat, as many bluegrassers do, and Abby plays more relaxed, on the back side of the beat. We gradually meet more and more in the middle the more we play together.”

Meeting in the middle isn’t, of course, restricted to meter. There is a tension between technique and narrative that weaves its way into all the music that they make together.

“The first time Abby and I collaborated formally on a duet,” says Fleck, “was a tune called *Annabelle June* for the Appalachian Picking Society recording project. Abby had been asked to contribute a tune to the album

and she asked me if I might like to collaborate with her. Before that, I played on her *Song of The Traveling Daughter* album on the track *Mama...* Those two tracks helped us to see possibilities.”

They were possibilities that, perhaps understandably, weren’t entirely obvious prior. The emotional core of the music that they make together is best seen in tracks like that very duet, *Annabelle June*, pitting Washburn on one side and Fleck on the other. Fleck first recorded *New South Africa* with The Flecktones in 1997, though with Washburn it takes on a far less muscular character. It becomes the musical equivalent of a mid-afternoon discussion over coffee: playful, light, comfortable, a moment away from the rush of the day. It works because it allows both players to express their own character and to retain their own voice as they circle effortlessly, joyfully, and at times impishly around a number of musical ideas, comments, and whispered asides.

It was in order to open up that kind of musical space that the two decided to record an album of strict duets: two people, two instruments, two voices, no overdubs.

“With just two people,” says Fleck, “the reaction time is so simple, and our choices multiply... I love the freedom of the duo format. Partly it’s because I don’t have to stay on the way of other musicians when backing







"With just two people the reaction time is so simple, and our choices multiply... I love the freedom of the duo format. Partly it's because I don't have to stay out of the way of other musicians when backing up the vocals or instrumentals. I have a clear field of play, and I love being able to do whatever I feel at the moment."

— Bela Fleck

Dickens.

"For my part, I thought it would be neat to find some unusual way-up-the-neck stuff, along with a very simple groove. When we recorded the song, I developed the banjo part so that every verse would have its own unique approach, and colour."

As it turns out, it's a very good role for Fleck, and not one that he's had so obviously in past projects. With Washburn he sits back a bit, assuming the duties of producer and accompanist, supporting and augmenting the musical ideas rather than originating them. At times he can step a bit too far forward—as in the overly self-conscious insertion of a few bars of *O Suzanna* in the song *Railroad*—though, to be fair, they are still finding their roles, including those as parents.

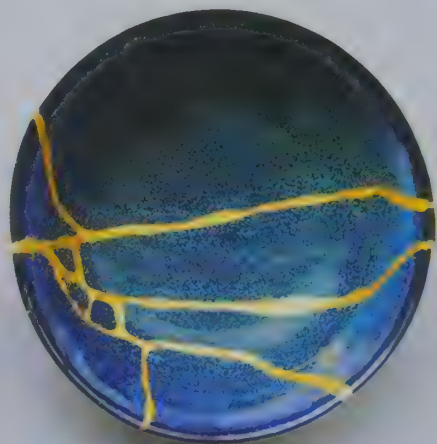
"It's a very special moment in our lives," says Fleck, "recording and touring together with our toddler. The reason we really needed to do our duo project now was because we wanted to keep our family together as much as possible. In our previous life, before baby Juno, we spent large amounts of time touring separately, travelling to meet each other wherever we each ended up. Now we are together, and it feels great!"

vocals or instrumentals. I have a clear field of play, and I love being able to do whatever I feel at the moment."

The drama, the stories, and the personas that give the music narrative shape come primarily from Washburn, as on her riveting take on *And I Am Born to Die*. "It is a favourite track for us on the new album," admits Fleck, and rightly so. "Abby's vocal is highly influenced by older styles of American traditional singing. Singers like Doc [Watson], Ginny Hawker and Hazel



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# Tubthumping

**Their impeccable pedigrees suggest great possibilities. Their new disc provides the undeniable proof.**

By Yves Bernard

## Les Poules à Colin

**T**he future seems promising for traditional music in Quebec, and there is one group that sums up the passing of generations rather well: Les Poules à Colin. This past November, they released their second official album, *Ste-Waves*, and it has brought them to a new stage in their career—that of greater recognition.

“*Ste-Waves* is an imaginary concept that we are constantly in search of,” explains Colin Savoie-Levac, making reference to the idea illustrated on the album’s cover. He is the Colin in Les Poules à Colin and it was him that allowed the group to find their legendary name, which pays homage to one of Quebec’s most illustrious traditional songs. Like the group, the name also evokes the richness of intergenerational transfer. Indeed, these four ladies and young man are all from families of active traditional musicians.

They seem to be a unique phenomenon. The group includes Colin Savoie-Levac on stringed instruments and podorhythm as well as his sister, Marie, and the two are the children of flutist Denise Levac, who has played with Manigance and Dentdelion. Through the latter, Denise now shares destinies with Beatrix Méthé, Les Poules’ singer and fiddler, whose parents are Claude Méthot and Dana Whittle, two fearless pioneers who have been involved in the scene for the past three decades. Dana, for example, is at the heart of the Folquébec organization, the first of its kind to be dedicated to the international promotion of folk artists from Quebec. And that’s not all. Another important figure of

Quebecois trad, Paul Marchand, is the father of the group’s pianist and singer, Sarah Marchand-Lebossé, while Gilles Pitre, the father of the young band’s guitarist Éléonore, was once the director of the Mémoire et Racines Festival, where Les Poules made their debut. That’s quite the history!

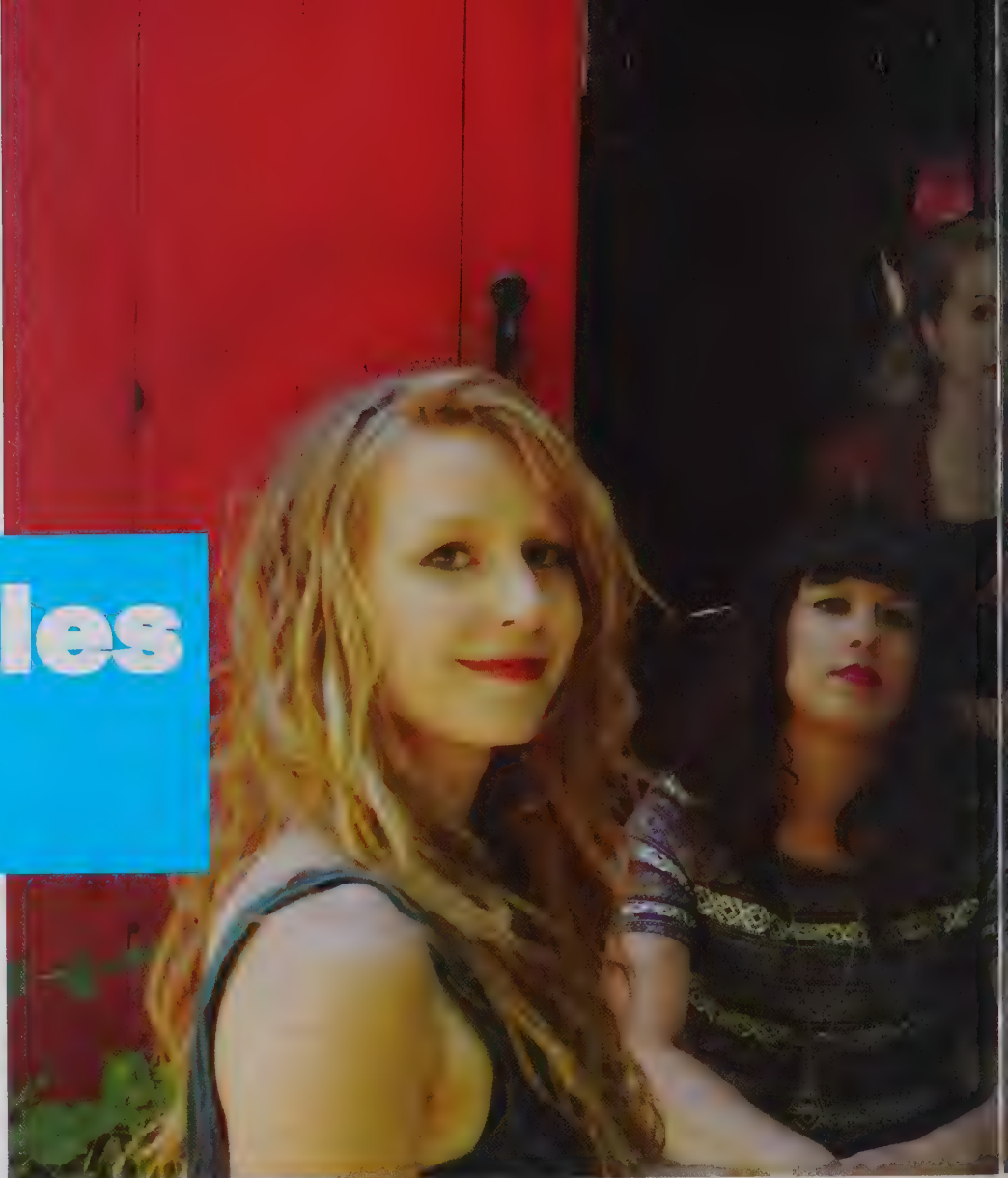
“Marie and Éléonore played on the Mémoire et Racines stage that features up-and-coming artists, and that’s when we got started, around 2008-2009. We’ve known each other through our parents since we were kids but we didn’t necessarily play together until we started Les Poules,” Colin Savoie-Levac tells us. At the age of 12, he started by learning the mandolin, and then went on to the guitar, the banjo, and, among other things, the bouzouki. He currently plays with The Duhks and is an occasional stand-in with La Bottine Souriante and De Temps Antan. Like Marie, Sarah, and Éléonore, he studied pop and jazz, and it can be heard in the group’s music. Even if Les Poules’ starting point is traditional music, they also draw from folk, new acoustic music and contemporary independent music.

How does the group work? Does each mem-

ber defend a certain musical style of which they are particularly fond? “It’s not necessarily that each person brings a precise influence. Maybe the traditional side comes more from me, Beatrix, and Sarah because we have played a lot of it in our lives, but at the same time, the pieces are always arranged by the five of us and the influences come from whatever we’re listening to,” Colin replies.

What were they listening to most when they recorded *Ste-Waves* with producer Simon Marion? “Some very pop groups but also Alt-J, who really inspired us with their vocal harmonies, and The Punch Brothers for their mix of punch, trad, and pop. Their recording approach is impressive.” This allows us to understand the spirit of *Ste-Waves* a bit better, as it is profoundly traditional yet completely open to current trends in the world of pop, appropriately reflecting the group’s youth (all of the members are in their early twenties).

There is also a beautiful North American folk spirit that pervades the album in its atmospheric moments with slide guitars, its rocking acoustic guitars, its jazzy piano and its improvising violin and mandolin. Moreover, its title track







ng in English. This is something unique: "We started out as a traditional Quebecois group but we play the music that we like. We sing in French because it's our culture, and the traditional songs are in French because that's our tradition, but Beatrix wrote *Ste-Waves*, and it came out in English. On our first album, there were two English songs that were written by Béa's mother, Dana Whittle. It's her first language. So we love both the French and English languages."

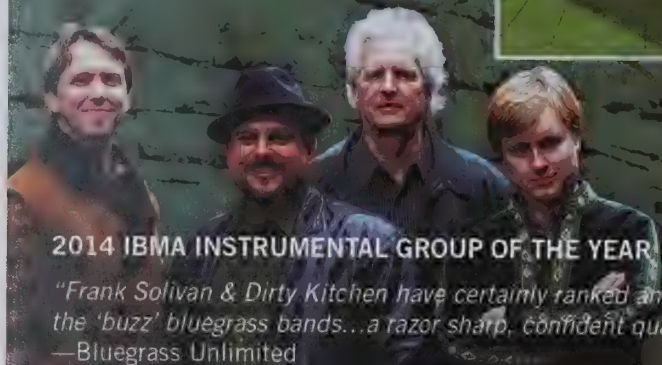
Among all of these influences, the Lanaudière region can be heard throughout the album, whether it is in song or in reel, in the background of the pieces or at the forefront. Almost half of the songs are traditional and the lyrics and stories that are told are well chosen; they speak of love, leaving for war, the hardships of married life, a shepherdess in an enchanted wood, and a bride who embarks on a ship dressed as a man... "In traditional music, there are often songs that don't necessarily mean anything. We try to avoid that and tend toward songs that tell actual, beautiful stories. Take the song *L'Écolier*. At the end of a lot of traditional songs, the woman will often be cheated on or abandoned but in this one she ends up with two husbands and she chooses both of them. We're singing about a feminine victory," says Colin.

Among the group's influences, he mentions Les Poules' parents, the many trad musicians they have come to know and, more specifically, the American group Nightingale as well as Éric Beaudry. "Whether it's with Trouquet, De Temps Antan, or Les Frères Beaudry, he has an approach to traditional songs that's a little more pop. It's something that we've always appreciated."

Translated by Jane Ehrhardt

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# Tubthumping

From his bedrock of blues, the veteran guitar slinger stretches out beyond his comfort zone.

By Tom Murray

## Big Dave McLean

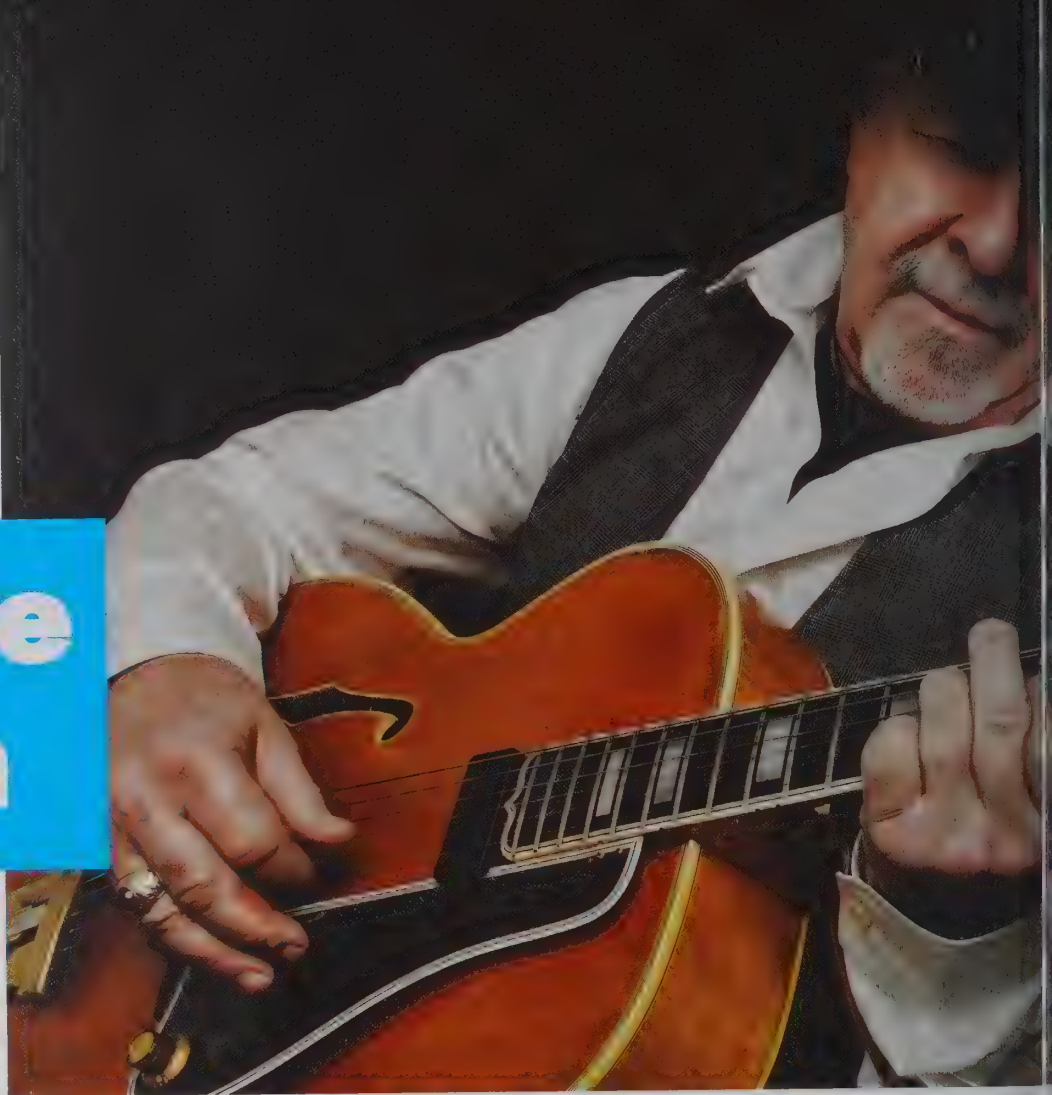
If the house happens to catch on fire, Big Dave McLean has a plan.

The Winnipeg resident will make sure that his family gets out of the house, after which he's grabbing the framed note from Muddy Waters that was handed to him after McLean opened for the great man in 1977. Priorities, right? Just so you know, the tax forms can stay and burn.

"If nobody else likes me I can at least say that Muddy Waters did," laughs the singer/songwriter over the phone, taking time off from preparations for an upcoming Black Hen Records tour. "This is the inventor of the electric blues, and he took the time to thank me. We struck up a bit of a friendship there, and it's something I'll always cherish; here's this guy, the father of the electric blues, someone that Clapton and the Stones and so many other people bow down to, and he's talking to me like the neighbour over the fence. I was deeply moved by that gesture from him, because he really didn't have to."

McLean's love for the forefathers of blues runs quite deep as well; he's spent a great deal of time paying homage to them over the last five decades, right down to recording *Muddy Waters for President* on 2003's *Blues from the Middle*. Most of his career has been spent at the altar of the Delta and Chicago blues, bringing something of a prairie feel to the music while staying true to the sentiment.

He continues to stay true with his latest album, *Faded But Not Gone*, while exploring a little outside of his usual musical comfort zone. McLean attributes the push to producer and multi-instrumentalist Steve Dawson, who



brought McLean down to Nashville to record, and then surrounded him with cream-of-the-crop collaborators and a number of unusual song choices, such as the Tom Waits classic, *Mr. Siegal*.

"It's a good thing my parents weren't there to hear me sing the first lyric (*Spent all my money in a Mexican whorehouse, baby / Cross the street from a Catholic church*)," McLean laughs. "They would have slapped me upside the head and asked me what I was doing. Waits is a genius lyricist though, a real poet. I never thought that I'd be covering one of his songs until it was suggested but I always loved his music. It wasn't a straight cover, though; I learned the song and we go to record it, and suddenly Steve grabs a banjo. I said, 'What, you're going to play a banjo on this song?'. But that's what we needed to do; if you're going to record Tom Waits you have to put your own stamp on it, otherwise you may as well just play the record."

At this point in his career it would take a far more heavy-handed producer than Steve Dawson to erase McLean's personal stamp on a recording. If anything, Dawson has subtly enhanced it, bringing nuance to a voice steeped in blues verities, cushioning McLean's yowl with crafty musical underpinning.

"We discussed everything before I came

down, because we didn't want to do something that would just be another barroom blues album. Not out of disrespect to that music, just for a different spin on things. It helped that the band he put together were so amazing. I was comfortable with them almost immediately, and fell into sync with the songs we had because of that."

Dawson assembled a crack team behind McLean, including perennial Colin Linden rhythm section of bassist John Dymond and Gary Craig. Linden stepped in for some sessions, as did old McLean pal Colin James; Nashville piano player Kevin McKendree sat in, as did gospel legends the McCrary Sisters. Engineer Bil VornDick worked on albums by Marty Robbins, Jerry Douglas, Doc Watson, and Doc McCoury, to name just a few.

*Faded But Not Gone* suggests new directions for McLean but none that deviate in any way from his bedrock influences in the blues.

"You gotta do what you gotta do," he chuckles. "When it comes down to it, I'm just that guy with a guitar who loves the music. I've never been to prison or picked cotton but I've been inspired by the guys who had to go through that, and the feel they've given me through their music. Music that touches your heart is what it's all about. I once played a penitentiary where the warden was standing behind





is guy who killed four people. I was playing a Slim Harjo ballad and both the warden and the killer had tears rolling down their cheeks. After I was talking to the killer, and he said (affects a rasp), 'Yeah, that song reminded me of my mom'. That's what I mean; here's a situation where music is touching people on opposite sides. They're meeting the same way. That's what I like about blues, everybody relates to it. There's always something you can get from that music; if you wake up and don't want to go to work, there's at least a dozen songs written about that!" Or, in McLean's case, one song, a heartfelt homage to his mother titled *Shades of Grace*.

"I don't play a lot of my own stuff, usually, but when I write I feel I have to actually say something, not just repeat what everyone else has done," he explains. "I can't very well write, 'Woke up this morning, I can't find my shoes'. That's not particularly original or true, and the guys who sang that actually didn't have any shoes! I just feel that I have to write as genuinely and passionately as I can in the style. People can tell when you're screwing around."

That's something you really can't accuse McLean of after five decades worth of hard touring, recording, and making his presence felt in practically every venue in Western Canada. He's in it for the long haul, and even the album title of *Faded But Not Gone* reflects this, wryly acknowledging the state of a musical artist fading in and out of the public's consciousness. Just be assured that Big Dave McLean is a long ways from being gone from the scene.

"I was sitting in a restaurant with this fellow who wanted one of my older albums, so I brought it along for him. Another guy saw him holding it and says, 'Jeez, Dave McLean, is he even still alive?'. I put my hand up and said, 'Present'. I'm not quite gone yet; I'm at quarter to, maybe."

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# Tubthumping

She drew from such diverse sources as Haida legends and Irish fiddlers to create her outstanding new album.

By Pat Langston

## Catherine MacLellan



**L**esson learned: *Beneath the Lindens* from Catherine MacLellan's stellar new album, *The Raven's Sun*, isn't about her famous songwriting father, the late Gene MacLellan, at all.

MacLellan senior wrote hits such as *Snowbird* and *Put Your Hand in the Hand*, so when I first heard *Beneath the Lindens*, whose narrator is a sensitive teen (Gene died in 1995 when his daughter was 14) and contains lines about artistic creativity and someone watching her from behind a tombstone, I'd assumed the song was meant to suggest that her departed dad was in some way still watching over her.

"I love it!" says MacLellan during a phone interview, referring to how easily we misinterpret songs. Turns out that the person watching from behind the gravestone was a stalker-ish ex-boyfriend who in real life did exactly that after a teenaged MacLellan, who lived near a cemetery, broke up with him.

Whoops!

Misinterpreted or not, and despite that creepy watcher, the song is lovely and has a sense of spaciousness about it. It seems to breathe easily, as does the entire album.

Chalk that up to the arrangements she and her musical and personal partner Chris Gauthier created, says MacLellan. "We spend a lot of time thinking about giving the song space so the lyrics are really present, and the music kind of ebbs and flows around them. That was part of the intention in making the record, to make something really intimate and stripped down but full at the same time."

That fullness is thanks in part to the acoustic and electric guitars, mandolin, fiddles, and bass played by MacLellan, Gauthier and others.

Along with emanating spaciousness, the record takes its time, as though it—or at least its composer—has realized something important about life and transience.

Just so, according to the P.E.I.-based artist. "I used to write a lot more but it changed when I had a daughter. So every song that comes now is an extra special gift. We take time with the arrangements and when we perform I try to be more in the moment than I used to be. Maybe I'm maturing: life gets faster and faster but I've learned to take my time."

Taking time informs especially the album's closer, *Winter Spring*. The song finds the narrator and her love snuggled under the covers on a cold winter morning, with her pleading to stay where it's quiet and warm just a bit longer. The song has that delicious, slightly muffled feel that Canadians in particular know when the winter slows all of life a little.

The song also references lighting a wood stove on a cold morning—a rewarding chore for those of us who heat our homes that way and one which evokes a particularly Canadian, albeit rustic, image. Coincidentally, MacLellan has to abandon the interview temporarily when the guy who supplies her firewood shows up at

her door.

Songs like *Winter Spring* embody not just the measured approach to time that underpins the album but also the fine, fresh melodies that help define it.

MacLellan attributes the latter, in part, to opening herself up to broader musical sources than just the 1960s and '70s-era folk performers that used to dominate her music collection. She and Gauthier now listen to a lot of fiddle music on the road (she name checks in particular the Irish-born fiddler Martin Hayes), and MacLellan says that instrumental music has influenced her new perspective on melody.

The title track that also opens the album has an infectious, lilting melody, one which co-spies with the lyrics to announce the theme of darkness-into-light that underpins the record. The raven and sun hearken back to the Haida legend about how the raven brought light into the universe, but the emergence from darkness and the casting off of an old life in the song's lyrics also suggest MacLellan's own long-time battle with depression and her gradual acceptance that it's just part of her life. It's a battle that other singers, from David Francey to Leonard Miles and Laura Smith, have spoken about.

"Maybe (artists) are just more willing to talk about it," says MacLellan, referring to estimates that up to 12 per cent of the population





n deals with serious depression. On the other hand, “As musicians and songwriters especially, those are things we tap into; those darker places and of inspire songs.”

Quite aside from its symbolic value in depicting some of life’s struggles, the light-bringing raven is also a bird that MacLellan has come to know well in her own, rural backyard.

“Two of them nest outside my house, and I see them every day whether they’re making their crazy noises or flying overhead. They stop usually once a day to feed on my compost pile, so they’re almost part of my family,” she says. “They’re very interesting. Even between different flocks they have their own personalities.”

The album covers a lot of other ground including, in *Tell Me Lucia*, reminiscences of her deceased grandmother. Born in Manitoba, MacLellan married a military man and, says her granddaughter, had a child in pretty much every province before settling down in P.E.I. She was “the toughest little gal to ever leave the Prairies”, according to the song, and MacLellan recalls seeing old photos of her grandmother at the lady’s wake. Those snapshots showed her grandmother, who went off on curling jaunts with her cronies, “in hotel rooms drinking and smoking and playing cards. It showed me this other side of my grandmother”.

And while MacLellan’s father doesn’t appear in *Beneath the Lindens*, his influence is found throughout his daughter’s work.

“He was my inspiration and showed me what it is to be a songwriter, someone who stays at home and works diligently on your songs. (After he died there was a long time before I could listen to his music but then, I got comfortable with that, I even started singing *Snowbird*, first as a lark but then over and over. I really learned about songwriting just through singing his songs.”

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# Tubthumping

With understated virtuosity and crystalline harmonies, this roots duo's songs stretch from whiskey waltzes to anti-war choruses.

By J. Poet

## Mandolin Orange

The music of Mandolin Orange is as timeless as the hills of their North Carolina home. The songs on *This Side of Jordan*, the duo's latest album, are steeped in the chilling harmonies of the traditional folk, bluegrass, and gospel music they grew up with. Despite the record's use of biblical references and its compassionate exploration of themes of mortality and salvation, the duo—guitarist, fiddler, and vocalist Emily Frantz and songwriter, singer, guitarist, and mandolin player Andrew Marlin—is quick to point out that it's a spiritual, not a religious record.

"We're not religious people," Frantz says. "A lot of spiritual themes run through the record but spirituality and religion are different things. The point was to use [biblical] phrases and vocabulary to convey different ideas, often the complete opposite of what organized religion might promote. For example, *Hey Adam* is meant as a reminder that love is love between any two people, be they man and man, man and woman, or woman and woman. We can't get behind the idea of a God who wouldn't agree."

"Religion is regimented and has rules," Marlin adds. "Spirituality is limitless and has no rules. Spirituality is an important part of life, that desire you have to step out of yourself and see the bigger picture. Religion shouldn't be used to limit someone's happiness or understanding of life."

When they play live, Mandolin Orange delivers quietly emotional music with a definite spiritual resonance. They can silence the most rowdy club with their calm intensity. The songs may seem delicate with their simple, familiar chord structures and melodies that sound like

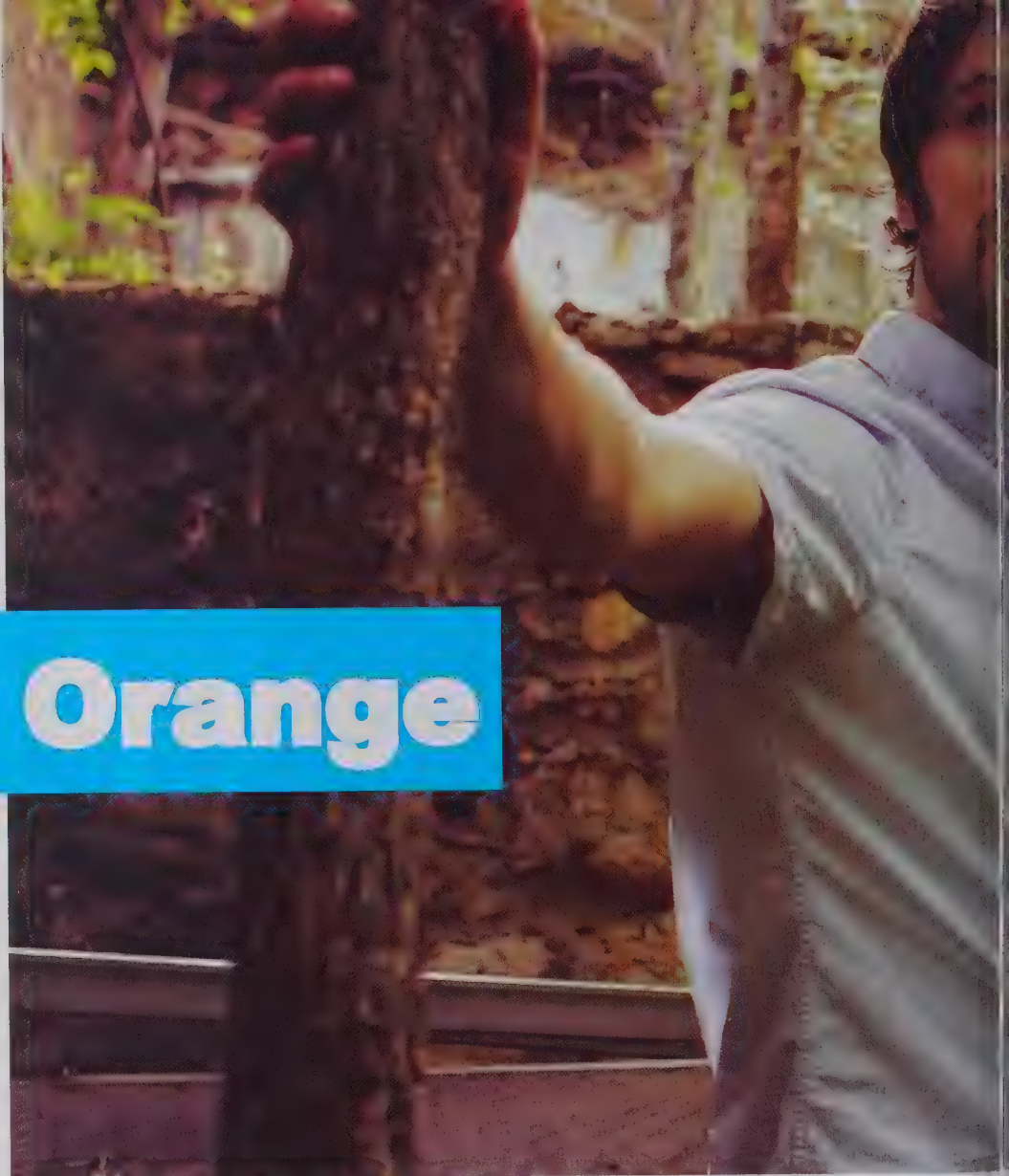
they've been around for generations, but Marlin and Frantz display an understated virtuosity and passionate vocal presence that's impossible to resist. "We rock out with the phrasing of our singing and the hard rhythms of the acoustic guitar," Marlin says, only half joking. Every time they play, the duo taps into something primal, with seemingly effortless ease.

The reserved presence of their live shows is mirrored in the performances captured on *This Side of Jordan*. By adding discreet electric guitar and a minimal drum kit, Mandolin Orange has expanded their musical palette without sacrificing any of the subtlety that makes their music so compelling. *Waltz About Whiskey* is a drinking song, a quiet honky tonk stomper, with the duo's aching harmonies supported by Josh Oliver's country piano and Nathan Golub's crying pedal steel accents. Frailing banjo and acoustic guitar highlight *Cavalry*, an anti-war song with a sharp, ironic chorus, while *The Doorman*, who could be St. Peter or a drug dealer, examines people who are driven to balance on the edge of the abyss, with the mistaken idea that they'll never fall

over. Oliver's distorted electric guitar accent adds an excruciating tension to the subtle lyrics. *Until the Last Light Fades* shows the duo's folky side. It's just guitar, mandolin, and the crystalline harmonies telling the story of a man on his deathbed, trying to comfort the family he loves and must leave behind.

"Mortality has always been a strong muse for Andrew," Frantz explains. "It grows out of his losing his mom when he was 18. He also took a bad fall while he was writing the songs on the album. He broke his pelvis. He came out of it OK but it could have gone so many other, worse ways. While his bones were growing back together, he had a lot of time to contemplate that. It made him look at mortality in a more optimistic and motivating light and allowed him to let go of some of the anger and regret, which you can hear in the songs."

Marlin composed the songs on *Jordan* over the course of a year but he wasn't thinking of specific themes as he wrote. When he had enough material for an album, they went into the studio with some friends and started recording. "We like to create a space on an album







can't create live," Marlin says. "We've done albums as a duo and. This time, we reached a middle ground. The important thing was the acoustic sounds in the foreground and let them carry the groove. We have the guitar keeping time rather than the drums, and have the guitar come in on occasion to lift up the songs when the acoustic sound created an atmospheric sound we can only imply live, but it's there. We use negative space just as much as we use positive space." Though Marlin had a good idea of how he wanted the songs on *Jordan* to be, he never imposed his arrangements on Frantz or the other players. "To me, the songs take on a life of their own. The other musicians hadn't done the songs before, so a lot of ideas go floating around. The spontaneity of the arrangements comes from the other guys. Their first instincts usually go on record, creating a cool blend of ideas and energy. We made this album in five days. We just dove in full force and came out with an album." Marlin and Marlin both grew up playing music, although not folk or bluegrass. "I was in a few rock cover bands and had a heavy metal duo with a friend of mine," Marlin recalls. "A friend gave me a copy of *Skaggs and Rice*, an instrumental album by Ricky Skaggs and guitarist Tony Rice.] After listening to it twice, I sat down and learned how to play every song on it. That's how I started loving old-time bluegrass." Frantz says. "As soon as I heard bluegrass, I started joining bands. I was mostly playing covers of bluegrass songs until I met Andrew. The first time we jammed together, the harmony was just flowing. [Mandolin Orange] is pretty much the first 'serious' band I've ever been in."

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# Tubthumping

Drawn together by a common interest in traditional music, they take a huge creative leap forward with a new album.

By Jason Schneider

## The Bombadils

The surest test of a true *Lord of the Rings* fan is if they know the name Tom Bombadil. Although he was left out of Peter Jackson's film adaptation because of his marginal presence in the story, those who love the books can't forget his cameo appearance as he aids the hobbits early in their journey, entertaining them with his music and rhyme.

Luke Fraser, Sarah Frank, Anh Phung, and Alan Mackie identified so strongly with this carefree and mysterious character that they named their band after him. It's proved to be a prescient choice, as The Bombadils' brand of Celtic folk has come to convey much of the simple good feelings that old Tom showed Frodo and his companions.

"We love him because he's musical and he's special—he's not affected by the ring," Frank, the band's fiddler, says. "But we also liked the name partly because Nickel Creek has an amazing song called *In The House of Tom Bombadil* written in the same 7/8 meter he uses when he speaks. So it was really a combination of the literary reference and the musical reference that made sense for us to use it to represent ourselves."

In addition to Frank's top-notch chops, The Bombadils' sound is marked by Phung's skills on flute, with Fraser and Mackie carrying the entire rhythm load on acoustic guitar and stand-up bass, respectively. It all comes across like a breath of fresh air on their brand new sophomore album, *Grassy Roads, Wandering Feet*, which shows the group flexing its songwriting



muscles as well, much more than on their 2012 debut, *Fill Your Boots!*.

"We'd done a lot of touring in support of that first album, so we were feeling pretty comfortable and confident going into the making of this one," Fraser says. "For me, songwriting is still kind of new but I'm really enjoying it. I know I have something to say, and right now it's kind of about sweeping away the layers and finding out what that is. Our musical foundation is bluegrass and Irish music but it's really exciting now when someone brings in a skeleton of an idea and we have to come up with an arrangement to flesh it out."

That spirit of collaboration has been ingrained with the band members since they first connected while attending university in Montreal. They had all been born and raised in different parts of the country but bonded over a common curiosity of traditional music. "I was classically trained but from the moment I heard Irish music I thought it was the coolest sound ever," Frank, an Edmonton native, says.

"Once I got the courage to try it, I loved the social aspects of the music. I met Anh during our first week at school and we became best

friends. She was classically trained as well but really wanted to get away from that. So we both decided to pursue these new sounds we were interested in. We got a bachelor apartment with bunk beds and started playing in Irish pubs shortly after that. We met Luke about a year later; it was all really casual until we graduated in 2012 and we all decided to get a lot more serious about it. There really wasn't a hesitation. I think that's why this band has done so well so far; we didn't just bond over music, we became really great friends as well."

Indeed, Fraser and Frank recently married and relocated to Toronto in order to keep raising The Bombadils' profile. After several years, the band is edging closer and closer to being a full-time commitment, something Fraser never expected in the beginning. "When we started we were just trying to get a gig at Hurley's Irish Pub in Montreal," he says. "That was the ultimate for us. Since then it's been a gradual process, and we've come to realize in order to have a career as a band you just have to jump in the deep end and go for it."

He continues, "You slowly learn how to do things. Our first tour was two weeks in the





faritimes, and we started getting more ambitious from then on. The first time we went to the States, it was kind of scary. We didn't know who to expect and tried not to run up a huge debt. But it went OK and we've gone back. We also did a tour of Sweden, and that showed us that we could tour Europe as well. So we're really excited about getting out on the road with this new album."

The Bombadils' desire to take their music around the world is totally keeping with the sense on *Grassy Roads*, *Wandering Feet* that the troubadours at heart, perhaps even descended from ancient minstrels. But no matter where they go, Fraser says that a Canadian sensibility will always be evident in what they do. When asked what song on the new album particularly stands out for him, he mentions *Nova Scotia Goodbye*, a reflection of his own departure from his birthplace.

"I wrote pretty much all of that song with the idea of creating something that pays tribute to the Celtic tradition, while conveying its own message," Fraser says. "It's basically about how Nova Scotians take so long to say goodbye to each other but I realize now that anybody can relate to that. So that way I'm really proud of how the song turned out."

Fraser concludes, "We've become more conscious of being a Canadian group since we've been playing outside the country, particularly on that trip to Sweden. We took part in this thing called Ethno, which is a huge international folk music camp. We were representing Canada and it was a bit of a challenge, because when I think of Canadian music, I think songwriters like Gordon Lightfoot and Neil Young dominate it more than instrumentalists. So it's possible that those artists might start having more of an influence on our music in the future."

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# Tubthumping

The Juno Award-winning Latin guitarist features some of his finest playing ever on his first recording in a decade.

By Roger Levesque

## Oscar Lopez

Oscar Lopez muses over how he came to release his first solo album in a decade, *Apasionado*.

"I started out as an independent artist. Now I'm an independent artist again."

That barely hints at the remarkable personal journey of the Chilean-born guitar virtuoso who came to make his home in Western Canada in 1979. Following his early self-produced efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s, the man's fervent fusion of Latin, jazz, and folk styles eventually made him one of the most popular artists on the Narada World label and win him two Juno Awards (he's been nominated several more times for his all-star collaborations).

But music rarely makes for an easy career. Lopez met up with his greatest challenge, his self-described "inner demons", after his fourth and last Narada album, *My Destiny*, was released in 2003. That's when his psyche succumbed to a mind-numbing case of anxiety and depression that took him away from music completely for about two years, including a few weeks in hospital.

"I took my music and my guitar and my friends for granted. I closed the door and the window and got myself in a spiral. I met some amazing people inside. What they call patients, I call passengers, and I was a passenger, too. I may never be fully out of the depression but I have learned to cope with it. I couldn't play guitar for a while. Then I found out music was my therapy all along."

The trip back has been a gradual one aided by the support of his wife, the birth of his son, and the help of a few good musical friends. James Keelaghan coaxed Lopez into making their second Compadres duo project, *Buddy Where You Been?* (2007; the title a reference to the guitarist's break and return to playing), followed by



a tour of Australia and New Zealand. Then his fellow guitarists Pavlo and Rik Emmett drafted him to record and tour as part of the contrasting string trio Trifecta (2009). But Lopez was still leary of making a move on his own.

It's been about two years now since a friend suggested he should check out the calmer pace of life in British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. That's how the guitarist and his family came to leave Calgary, AB, (his home since 1981) for an extended sojourn near Naramata, BC. They were attending a concert at the small but famous Dream Cafe in the adjoining town of Penticton when he befriended Justin Glibbery, leader of Naramata's community choir.

As it turned out, Glibbery was a musician himself, a teacher, and sound engineer with his own small studio and valuable contacts to musicians in the area and along the West Coast. Lopez credits Glibbery, "my right-hand man",

for drawing him back into the studio to make *Apasionado*, one or two tracks at a time over the course of a year.

Glibbery's keyboards figure alongside six other musicians including bassist Stefan Bie, percussionist Michael Treadway, violinist Elizabeth Lupton, reedman Stan Sabourin and two other horn players, plus the dozen-strong Naramata Choir. Several special guests such as Compadres bassist Hugh MacMillan were overdubbed long distance. Lopez pulls off some of the finest playing he's ever done on various guitars, a small guitarlele, some mandolin, percussion, and a few vocals.

Clearly, his journey to the Okanagan was a journey back to psychic health, to being in tune with his own creative being. The memories all come together on *Road To The Blue House*, inspired by the isolated dwelling his small family called home during their stay



aramata.

"I didn't know where life was taking me but I earned something and it was meant to be. We went through some hard times but I was meant to get myself together. That's why this album *pasionado* means a lot to me. Passion, that's what life is about."

Lopez is still amazed at what they accomplished over 14 varied pieces. Certain tunes pay homage to some of his favourite Latin grooves. Check the Brazilian feel of *Bahia*, allusions to Argentine tango on *Fina Estampa*, hints of a waltz on *Treasures Of Vienna*. He admits he's never taken a purist's approach to guitar styles but his roots will never leave, either.

"It's not always a conscious thing. Everything I've done has a signature, just as it would be impossible for me to get rid of my accent, and I'm proud of that signature. But sometimes it's like a flavour that I bring to the songs or something I visualize."

He wrote tunes for his wife (Kathi Kramer is the comptrroller for the Calgary Folk Festival), and his now eight-year-old son, Niko, but the disc's final piece, *Line Of Fire*, packs a deeper, emotional message about life's challenges.

"You and I are on the line of fire," Lopez explains. "Soldiers and innocent people and

everyone who goes to work in the morning hoping to keep their job is on the line of fire. If you're dealing with cancer you're on the line of fire. It's about dealing with stress and pressure, lies and the distortion of reality, many things. It's an instrumental but everyone playing on the tune represents that."

The song really took shape when the guitarist found himself performing it at a benefit for flood relief at Calgary's football stadium in 2013, winning him a standing ovation from some 30,000 people. The experience pushed him to put Glibbery's choir on the track and by the time they finished recording it everybody was in tears.

"I'm 61 years old and, in a sense, all my life I've been in the line of fire. Not to be a victim, but I had to learn a new language and a new country, and after 35 years here I love my country. I'm not an angry man but a happy man who takes life as it comes. The song represents a lot of my life, my years of being a survivor. But it's *bonafide*."

Back in Calgary now, Lopez has put together a new trio with two hot younger players he's mentoring on percussion and second guitar, with a plan to hit the road more regularly. The survivor is ready for the rest of his career.



Look for her new single in 2015, "Bright Tomorrow" co-written with David Francey

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# Tubthumping

Their star is in its ascendancy. And the piano accordion is about to become famous.

By Colin Irwin

## The Alan Kelly Gang

“Oh my. Oh my. Oh my...that was something special...” Alan Kelly is talking about, what else...Canada.

“We were out twice in 2013. Winnipeg, Vancouver, Harrison Hot Springs. Then we came back just for a weekend and did Edmonton. That was fantastic. They really know how to do festivals in Canada. They just love the music. And that whole jam, workshop thing...we did one with Mike Scott and Steve Wickham and a singer from Mali, a beautiful looking girl. That was so cool. We could really jump on her riffs. And Rosanne Cash. It was wonderful. I’d love to do more.” Hint hint...

You may take it the garrulous Mr. Kelly from Co. Galway, Ireland, is fond of Canada and with his Alan Kelly Gang outfit flying high on the back of brand new album *The Last Bell*, he has plenty to be garrulous about. A piano accordion player of rare verve and dexterity, he’s been at it for a while now, fronting various bands along the way—plus a spell in the early 2000s playing Canadian festivals with De Dannan in addition to a decade backing Eddi Reader—but his star has never been quite as high as it is now.

The catalyst for this might well be Long Island flute player, singer (and nascent saxophonist) Steph Geremia, whom he met while taking a year out at Limerick University 10 years ago. Classically trained, Steph fell headlong into Celtic music and the pair of them teamed up—onstage and off. One day he was musing that the band could do with a singer

and was amazed when Steph said, “Well, I can sing!” And sing she does, with an imaginative repertoire that includes Kris Drever’s glorious song *The Poorest Company*, a rather lovely country-flavoured title track co-written with Boo Hewerdine and Finlay Napier and Music Makers, an astute adaptation of a classic Arthur O’Shaughnessy poem (“*We are the music makers, we are the dreamers of dreams...*”) The last person to set that poem to music was Sir Edward Elgar in 1912 but he didn’t have a piano accordion...or a singer like Steph Geremia.

Their momentum has gathered impressively since Kelly decided he should put together a proper collaborative band to end the perception that the show was a solo artist with backing musicians.

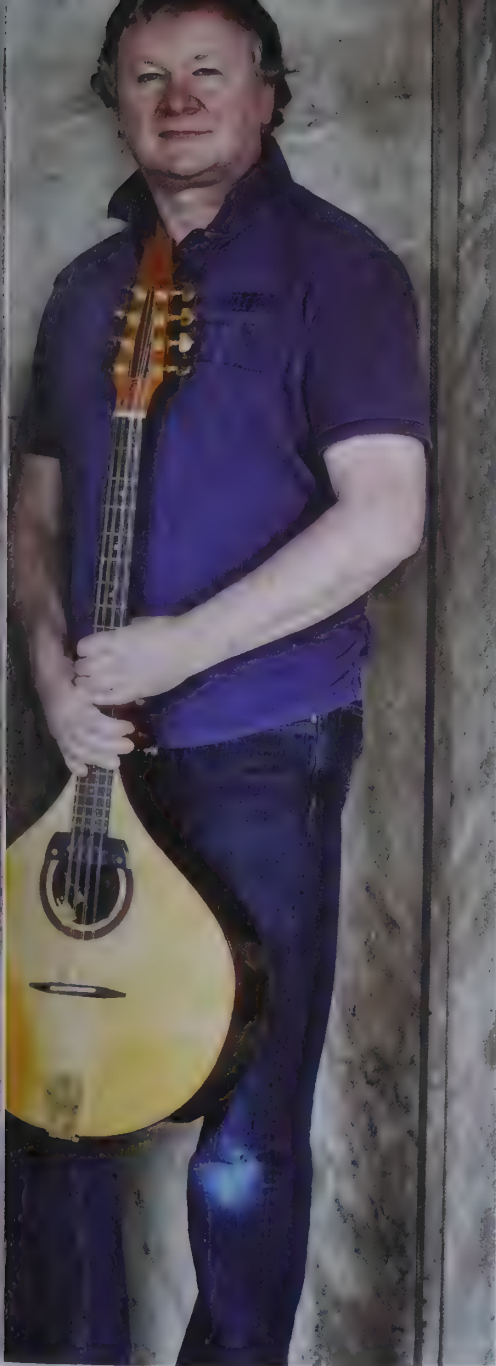
“I always toured with a lineup of fiddle, flute, and guitar and previously I played with Artie McGlynn, my brother John on flute and Tola Custy on fiddle, but at that stage I would have picked most of the music myself and I often

felt that festivals dismissed me as a solo act. I was trying to get away from the Alan Kelly name and we started going out as the Alan Kelly Quartet, but it sounded too classical and people didn’t maybe understand we had a bit of an edge. And then, when we were in Australia, everyone started calling us the Kelly Gang—after Ned Kelly—so we kept that. I wanted people to understand everything was now a collaborative effort, a proper band rather than a solo accordionist.”

With Kelly and Geremia now flanked by the brilliant Scottish fiddler Alasdair White and experienced Irish guitarist/bouzouki player/producer Manus Lunny—supplemented by occasional guest appearances from the glitter of Celtic music, including Eddi Reader, her husband John Douglas, and regular Julie Fowles guitar accompanist Tony Byrne—the band now have two albums under the Gang banner: *Small Towns & Famous Nights* and now *The Last Bell*.







"I'm delighted with the way the album turned out. Everyone brought something to the table. I produced a reel, Steph wrote some nice quirky tunes in 7:8 time and it's fantastic having Manus as producer because he has a wealth of experience and transformed some of the tunes straight away. We do these Shetland reels and started off hammering them out but Manus said slow it right down and try it with a groove and make it swing more...and it really works. It's great to play with a bouzouki again, too. I haven't done that for years. It's not like playing with guitar, there's a different texture and more counter harmony.

"Our philosophy is everything we do must be melodic and very tasty but still have that sense of tradition. It's a strong part of where I come from in Roscommon, which has a great fiddle tradition through people like Matt Molloy, Patsy Hanly, and Tommy Guihan. I was always into different genres of music but it's important to me that the Roscommon roots come through in the music...that strong Roscommon rhythm.

We basically just play music we like and hope the audience like it too."

The piano accordion has for many years been the butt of many jokes in traditional music circles for its apparent ungainliness and heavy sound but Kelly's success and versatility may have helped change all that. He originally played whistle but when he was eight he came across a white accordion in the turf shed which, it transpired, his dad had won in a raffle many years earlier. Alan fell in love with it instantly and never picked up the whistle again.

"I was a long time playing before I heard another piano accordion player, apart from my dad. Mary Finn taught me some really good techniques at summer school, then I heard Phil Cunningham on the radio one night and nearly collapsed—I thought he must have three hands! After that I heard people like Donald Shaw from Capercaillie and Karen Tweed and that opened up a whole new playing field. I already had a distinct traditional style, which is rare enough to hear on piano accordion but fits in well with fiddle, flute, and pipes.

"There used to be a lot of snobbery about accordions but I think that has largely disappeared over the last 10 years or so. There are lots of horror stories about these big piano accordions ruining many a good session. I remember when I first moved to Galway around '92, I'd go to a session and take out this accordion and everyone looked at me funny. But once I started playing, everything was cool."

Now, there are plenty of outstanding piano accordionists around to put the old prejudices to bed, like Mirella Murphy of Cherish The Ladies and Fiona Black of The Outside Track. "It's great. I do a lot of teaching and there are many good young players taking it up."

The Alan Kelly Gang have to fit in touring dates around Kelly's Eddi Reader work. He made his first appearance with her in Tokyo 10 years ago before he'd even met her—his only preparation was a quick tutorial from John McCusker based around her Robbie Burns material.

"It was a godsend for me at the time. I always wanted to play with a singer like that but it was a bit scary. She doesn't really use a set list and at first I was horrified. I went onstage at Tokyo having met her for the first time the day before and in the first half she played all the Burns stuff. So in the second half I said to John McCusker, 'What do we do now?' and he said 'Pray!'. So she goes into a song I'd never heard before and John turns and whispers to me, 'There's a lovely accordion solo coming up!'. There was a lot of busking involved but you learn quick..."

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Feb 4 *Homeroutes* Rocky Mountain House AB  
Feb 5 *Homeroutes* High River AB  
Feb 6 *Homeroutes* Lethbridge AB  
Feb 7 *Homeroutes* Eastend SK  
Feb 8 *Homeroutes* Medicine Hat AB  
Feb 9 *Ironwood Stage* Calgary AB  
Feb 10 *Homeroutes* Okotoka AB  
Feb 11 *Homeroutes* Olds AB  
Feb 12 *Homeroutes* Ponoka AB  
Feb 13 *Crooked Creek Opera House* AB  
Feb 19 *The Artery* Edmonton AB  
Feb 20 *Chars Landing* Port Alberni BC  
Feb 22 *Railway Club* Vancouver BC  
Feb 23 *Lazy Mikes* Qualicum Beach BC

### MARITIMES

Mar 6 *Charlotte St Arts House* Fredericton NB  
Mar 8 *House Concert* Sydney NS  
Mar 12 *The Ship* Saint John's NL  
Mar 13 *House Concert* Gambo NL  
Mar 14 *Citadel Concert* Lewisporte NL  
Mar 17 *Indian R. Lecture Thtr* Springdale NL

### ONTARIO

Mar 20 *Odd Fellows Hall* Dundas ON  
Mar 25 *Moonshine Cafe* Oakville ON  
Mar 26 *House Concert* Ottawa ON

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www.kimbeggs.com



# Tubthumping

Thirty years of photographing blues legends in Canada inspires gorgeous, pictorial volume.

By Roger Levesque

## Randy MacNeil

The blues originated in America but the music has made its own original footprint in Canada, too. One devotee, Randy MacNeil, wants to show you the force of the blues north of the border.

"The blues is here to stay. The blues has a strong will. New generations of kids are playing blues and blues societies are making it happen. It came from the south but it's in a strong place."

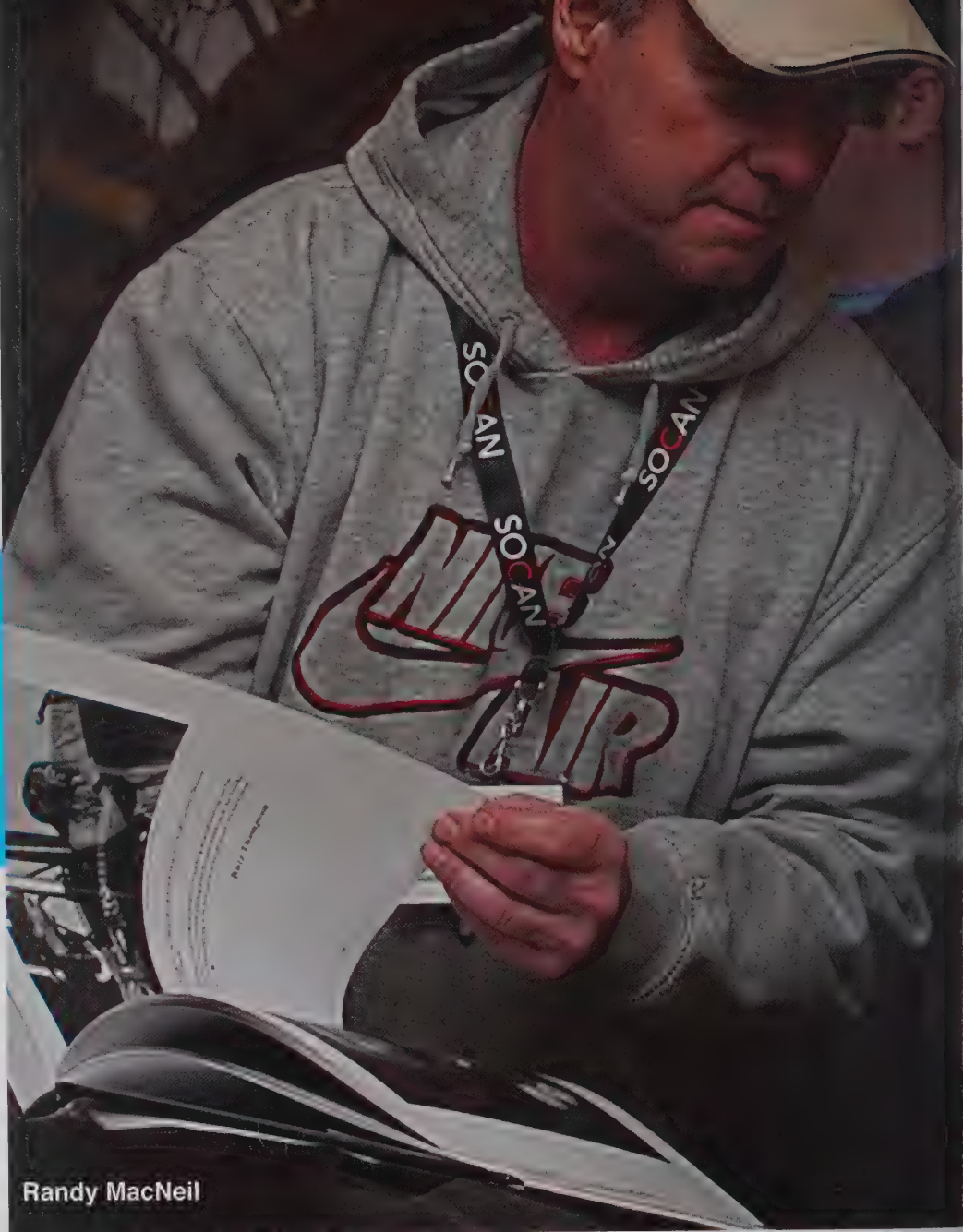
MacNeil should know.

The photographer has spent a great deal of time over the past three decades documenting the faces of Canada's blues personalities in photography. With the inspiration and help of his life-partner, Francine Aubrey, those efforts have been collected into a gorgeous book, *A Portrait of Blues in Canada – A Photodocumentary*. Well over 150 artists or bands are featured over 260 big pages in classic black and white.

In planning the weighty volume, one thing led to another (without the aid of any grants either). The end result offers an introduction to the nation's blues history in the musician's own words, in a depth that even surprised the guy behind the camera.

"I love the blues culture. It's a real community of people who care about each other. I love the musicians and what they do and I say hats off to them."

For most of his adult life MacNeil has actually earned his living in physical labour, construction, and related industries. He con-



sidered photography as a career but keeping it as his hobby made it a true labour of love and you can see that in the keen eye he brings to his work.

"I didn't take it too seriously. It was always friends of musicians who would invite me, saying, 'Why don't you come and shoot this?', but about six years ago Francine pushed me to do something with the archive I had built up."

When MacNeil began his five-year mission to publish the book he asked two basic questions of his subjects: who do you think helped to put blues on the map in Canada, and how have you had to persevere in the blues?

As the answers came trickling in, some were more extended than others but those reflections turned the book into more of a historical work than he ever hoped. Experts like Holger Petersen and Ken Whiteley fill in the gaps on a few long-departed musicians such as Long John Baldry.

MacNeil's friend, filmmaker Bill Barclay, penned the introduction, tracing the early visits

of Robert Johnson and Johnny Shines to Canada in 1937 and the influence of the *King Biscuit Time* radio show out of Memphis. Pioneers like Jackie Washington, Dutch Mason, Donny (Downchild) Walsh, and Big Dave McLean find their place along with the famous cross-border collective that came to be known as The Barons after they started with Ronnie Hawkins.

Dozens of others made the list of faces and stories, revving up the crowds under the spotlight, sometimes in the studio, all of them frozen in the camera but alive with music.

MacNeil was cutting up wood outside his lakeside cabin in Northern Quebec when he took time out to talk but his regular business address and the scene of many of his shoots is Ottawa. Aubrey is a singer/songwriter who undertook the massive job of the book's computerized layout but its origins really date back over MacNeil's 50 years.

Born in Cape Breton and raised in Ontario from age seven, he recalls "there was always music around me", with regular kitchen part-



or folk and fiddle music in particular. He was 2 years old when he saw his first blues act, Matt Minglewood and Sam Moon.

"I heard this noise coming out the back door of the legion. It was a rich world of music. At ceilidhs or private parties I was often wowed by seeing these musicians in the moment."

MacNeil got into snapping some of those moments around 16 "for fun" and got serious enough at 19 to spend four years at college learning his craft. Everything in the book is shot on 35mm film (he continues to buy bulk film from suppliers in New York). He's even building a new darkroom as he gradually eases into the digital technology that has taken over the industry.

Capturing musicians on film has always been his primary motivation.

"I've considered giving up on it a few times—it's costly—but then someone like Lazy Lester [Johnson] would phone me up and invite me to go on tour with him. How could you say no to that? So I spent a week with Lester and his band. He was telling me stories about how he met Lightnin' Hopkins and all these guys on the bus when he was 12 years old. He's the real deal."

Many of his contacts came just from hanging out. A few years ago he met James Cotton and

(now deceased) Hubert Sumlin, two legendary practitioners of southern and Chicago blues styles.

"They were playing the Dutch Mason Blues Festival in Nova Scotia. James saw my shot of him from a few years before and wanted a copy. They asked me to join them in their trailer and the next thing I know Bonnie Raitt walks in. You could tell she was like a little sister to them. Any time I can take out a camera without disrespecting someone I will."

Many of the images in the book came from festival encounters (he was a volunteer at the Ottawa Blues Festival early on) and MacNeil says he "never imagined I would be able to shoot James Brown or Ray Charles. He prefers going down to 'some dive' to catch his subjects under more intimate conditions and many of the subjects have become his friends.

"Some people assume these musicians live like rich people but the way these guys travel around this country to play some of the venues they have to play... That's one reason I'm doing this, documenting what musicians do here. It's not an easy haul, especially touring coast to coast. I have a lot of respect for them but they have no choice to do this. It's in them so deep."

One thing you can't help noticing leafing through the book are the smiles on the musi-

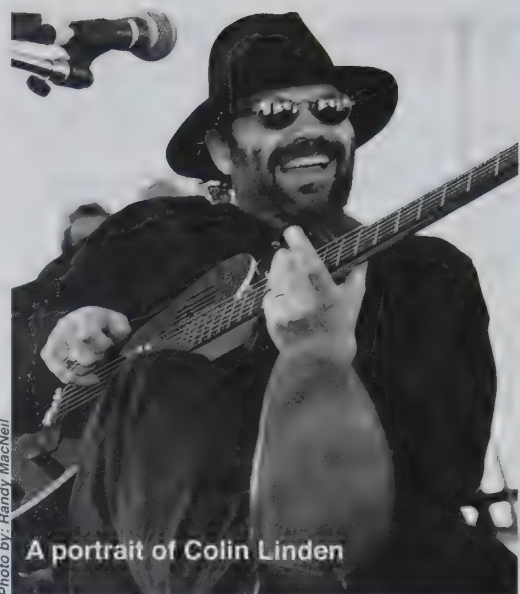


Photo by: Randy MacNeil

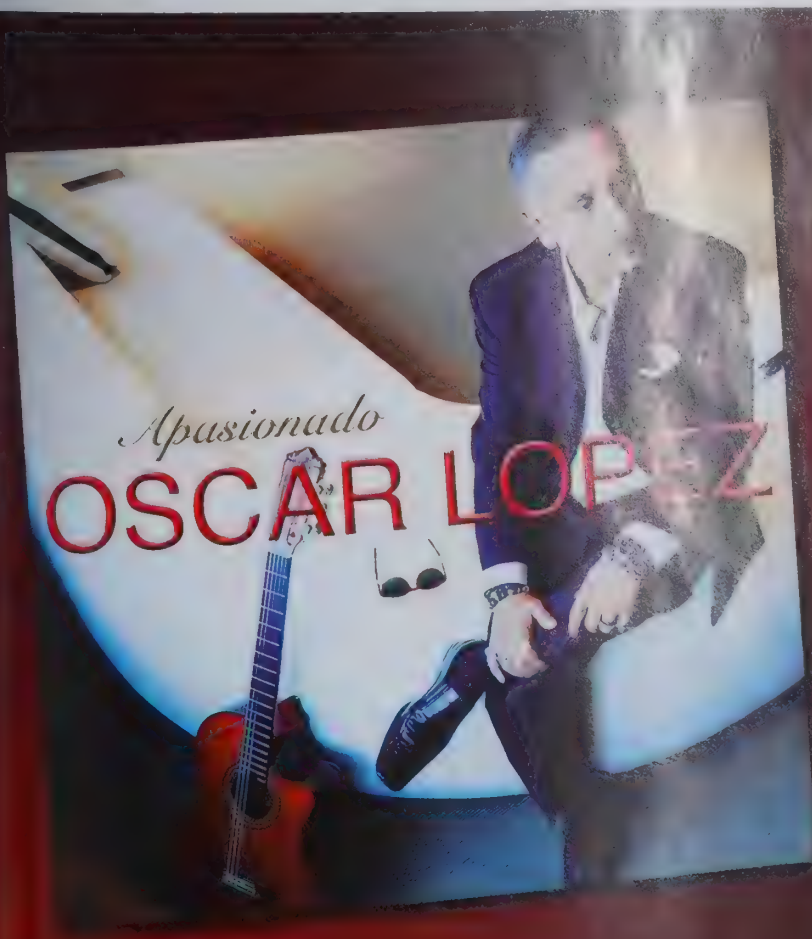
A portrait of Colin Linden

cians' faces, a nice counter to that time-worn stereotype that blues must be the song of the downtrodden.

"It's an unfair stereotype but I'm really just trying to capture a moment when the artist is putting it out there and everybody in that room is feeling it."

MacNeil is already considering a sequel, and a volume devoted to folk musicians.

Check his website at <http://www.randymacneil.com> for details on the book.



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# Tubthumping

Documentary filmmakers discuss their upcoming feature on the iconic Shirley Collins.

By Sophie Parkes

## Shirley Collins

For enthusiasts of traditional British music, Shirley Collins is a deity, a pioneer, a visionary. In their eyes, she has remained a pillar, steadfast in the ebb and flow of musical taste and fashion, continuing to bring forward songs, singers, and customs and showing us why we should care.

But her name, outside of this niche, finds blank looks and raised eyebrows. She is not a member of the folk establishment become an ambassador to the wider world.

Now, two filmmakers, Tim Plester and Rob Curry, seek to present her extraordinary story to a wider audience.

"She's not a singer/songwriter; her passion for traditional song probably stopped her from crossing over to the mainstream. This kind of folk music doesn't get a look in; it's the antithesis of Mumford & Sons. It's not about being famous; it's more about remembering—or half-remembering—'songs my Daddy taught me'," co-director Rob Curry says. "The fact that she's had an enforced hiatus for 30 years, too, probably didn't help."

If Tim Plester and Rob Curry sound familiar, it is probably due to their film *Way Of The Morris*, which was released in 2011. Tim recalls meeting Shirley for the first time at an early preview of *Way Of The Morris*. "It was in London in 2010, not quite the finished film. I met her very briefly afterwards and she said she enjoyed it. We managed to make a film about Morris without taking the mick, and I presume she must have appreciated that."



It was their producer, Paul Williams, who put forward their names when an acquaintance insisted that Shirley Collins be the subject of a film. They went to meet with her soon afterwards, and the singer and filmmakers clicked.

"Shirley knows our pedigree," Tim explains. "You really need a contract of trust with somebody who is going to make a documentary about you. A filmmaker can really stitch you up, especially through the edit process."

It was at this meeting that Tim and Rob were handed a copy of Shirley's autobiography, *America Over The Water*, and were enthralled at her descriptions of the performances she witnessed during her trip to America with Alan Lomax in 1959.

"It's all the music we love," Rob says.

"[The autobiography] is simply written; she

alternates chapters between the trip to America and her own childhood, growing up in Sussex. She talks about the people she met, how her grandparents would sing songs to her and Dolly. She deflects it all away from herself," Tim adds.

This modest approach to a cracking story urged them to make their own version but they decided early on that it couldn't be a simple biopic with talking heads. It had to be personal with firm involvement from Shirley, and beautifully shot.

"Our passion is narrative filmmaking. We've been thinking of calling it a non-fiction film that gives us more scope to be creative than straightforward documentary would. We want to get people into a cinema to see a film about a folksinger called Shirley Collins, somebody



ey've never heard of," Tim explains. "It's not dissimilar to our approach to *Way Of The Morris*—the last person I wanted to see that film was a Morris dancer!"

"It's a really exciting time to be making a documentary, though," Rob interjects. "The film board in Canada, for example, is licensing all kinds of creative documentaries. There are documentaries like *My Winnipeg*, *Sweetgrass*, *Leviathan*, Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell*, which have really opened up the genre, and that's what Shirley deserves."

Next, Tim and Rob commenced the hunt for funding but with no bites from conventional venues, the duo took to Kickstarter—even though it was something they initially found uncomfortable.

"The 'we're making a film so give us your money' stance has never sat well with us. It's not very self-deprecating, not very English, is it?" Tim laughs.

For all their misgivings, the Kickstarter campaign was carefully considered, their promo video warm and persuasive for all the right reasons. Potential backers were lured in with excellent rewards, including an extensive tribute album, *Shirley Inspired...*, with Will Oldham, Alasdair Roberts, Jackie Oates, and Graham Coxon among the contributors. The

campaign succeeded in July 2014 and, at the time of writing, 718 backers have pledged a total of \$14,951, £6,000 over their target of £25,000.

"Shirley is an icon; she has a strong, loving fan base," Rob says.

It's true—endorsements on the campaign website range from Wilco's Jeff Tweedy to Linda Thompson, while comedian Stewart Lee played a piece at the Café OTO launch party featuring Shirley herself, amongst others.

But a fully backed film now binds the filmmakers to a promise.

"It's certainly harder not to do it now! We're obligated to deliver the film, no matter how tough it might be," Rob says.

The film-making is already underway, with Shirley's participation very much at the epicentre.

"I think one thing she's really passionate about... how we would like to capture, but it's a balancing act [film subject] is giving you their time and energy, which is the lifeblood of the film. How do you make sure you keep your filmmaker's hat on it, that it's so important visually arresting to the viewer? Is it photogenic?" Tim explains. "During that short film, *Here We're Being Taken Care Of* out of an occasion of when we had to film something that turned out

not to be so visually engaging. We had to cover it differently and that's what led us to producing the film we did."

The prospect of making such a film as this means that the filmmakers don't truly know what will emerge. There isn't a script, and the funding isn't 'carte blanche drop-everything-funding', so filming must take place around other commitments. But the breathing space is valuable, allowing the filmmakers to pursue threads and themes as and when they occur.

"*Way Of The Morris* became a love letter to a particular corner of North Oxfordshire," Tim acknowledges, "but I didn't intend it to be. It just evolved over time."

So far, it's a comment from Shirley that has proved the biggest inspiration.

"At the launch party, I asked about the trip in 1959 and whether she ever thought about going back. It was her reply that really helped my thinking about what this film could be. She said that she didn't need to go back. She said, 'I'm often there, in my head. All I need to do is close my eyes'."

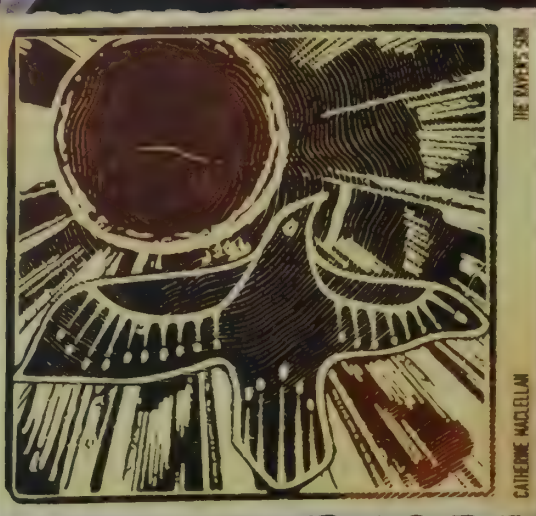
More information about *The Ballad Of Shirley Collins* can be found at [www.shirleycollins-movie.com](http://www.shirleycollins-movie.com).

# CATHERINE MACLELLAN THE RAVEN'S SUN

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# In the Presence of the Past



Matthew Byrne hails from a family steeped in Newfoundland's celebrated folk music traditions. Quite literally at the feet of his father and mother, he learned versions of songs rarely heard outside of tiny, isolated communities. Those songs have certainly held him in good stead. With the release of his riveting new recording, *hearts & heroes*, Byrne has matured into one of the country's finest interpreters of traditional song. By Roddy Campbell



The great English guitar player and folksinger Martin Simpson appears perplexed. "Who's this, then?" asks he, scrutinizing the car stereo as we exit the Edmonton International Airport. It's more of an appeal than a question, really. "Matthew Byrne from Newfoundland," he tells him smugly.

Martin grins, tickled it appears.

"Great voice. He's wonderful. He's got it all, hasn't he?"

Well yes, Martin, he certainly does.

"I'll need to get a copy. That's the great thing about coming to places like this, you find really good material nobody in Britain seems aware of."

They'll be aware of Matthew Byrne soon enough, I reckon. His splendidly riveting new solo recording *hearts & heroes* has been making his debut, *Ballads* (2010), *hearts & heroes* draws from a mix of traditional material. And as with his prior effort, it's carefully and singularly arranged, but there's also an obvious maturity and confidence—at play this time around that clearly accentuates his playing and singing. This sumptuous quality he attributes to performing with The Dardanelles—the high-flying trad' quintet out of John's, NL, managed by Bob Hallett of Great Big Sea.

"I think the adventures that I took with the arrangements on *Ballads* were heavily influenced by playing live with The Dardanelles," says Byrne, during a stopover in Toronto. "Ever since *Ballads* came out, I've been playing in this five-piece traditional band. I've always struggled with wanting to make a record that represents me when I write music, not just a guitar but also making songs that have the same beautiful layers that I love from the artists I listen to. You know, like Kate Rusby, and people like that. This record is split between those rich, layered arrangements and songs that can be recreated when it's just my guitar. If money allows, I'll have the band with me...but otherwise I'll be playing songs in their stripped-down form, the way I first approached them."

"When you have the players to draw on that I have, literally, in my neighbourhood, you can't help but give into that temptation. When you think of a sound, you can have it right away, and you can have it in your head, you know? It's hard not to make it. Quiet possibly, young Byrne rose out of the cradle singing. His father, Joe, and his uncle, Pat Byrne, along with their friend, Baxter Wareham, recorded one of Newfoundland's truly seminal albums. That record we'll get to soon enough. But first, let me introduce you, dear reader, to Matthew's mother, Linda, a collector of folk songs primarily gathered from the Placentia Bay area of Newfoundland.

"She has old tape recordings and stuff like that," says Matthew. "Mom didn't have any academic interest in collecting music, she did it because she just really loved what she was hearing and she just wanted to have it forever, you know? It's great stuff."

And then there's Matthew's older brother, Allan, one half of The Blue Rop, written about elsewhere in this magazine. So, to state the obvious, Matthew found all the inspiration he needed on his doorstep.

"I sing a lot of songs, and they range from common trad' songs [to] the ones that I've only ever heard sung by my grandmother, like *Fair Ellen* on the new record. I've only ever heard that version from a cassette tape that mom did of my nan. To me that's so cool, that I can bring what seems to be a scarce version of a song to traditional music listeners. I get a real kick out of that. If I was interested in playing all the same songs, I'd be playing the pubs."

Largely it's the melody and lyrics that attract him to such traditional songs as *Bold Nelson*, *True Love Knows No Season*, *Banks of Sweet Undee*, and *Claudie's Banks*. And yet he remains baffled why certain songs pique his interest more than others.

"I can't really put my finger on what it is that fascinates me. I'll be listening to [a song] in the car on a CD and I'll feel like I have to go home and grab a guitar and play it and figure out what it would sound like if it came from me. I don't know what compels me to interpret. I can't answer that question. I really don't know."

Primarily a guitarist, Byrne makes use of several match-winning open tunings on both his solo recordings. He's a dab hand on bouzouki and octave mandolin, too. And then there's his ecstatic ability to grab the raw essence of a song—Cyril Tawney's *Grey Funnel Line*, for instance—and present it unaccompanied in all its panoramic splendour.

"For me there are certain songs where the melody does everything. It doesn't need rhythm. It doesn't need instruments. It doesn't need anything. I really feel if a song has the perfect melody, and the perfect sort of turns of phrase, then it's my duty to prove that that's enough. That's what goes through my head when I approach some of those songs unaccompanied. A lot of the songs I learned from Mom I would never change the way I heard them because I'm just satisfied with the way they are in their most stripped-down state."

Despite all of the dramatic traditional material featured on *hearts & heroes*, arguably its stand-out track—the murder ballad *True Love Knows No Season*—comes from such an unlikely source as celebrated American multi-instrumentalist Norman Blake, known largely for his work accompanying the likes of Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, Ralph Stanley, and Robert Plant, and starring on the mega soundtrack *O' Brother Where Art Thou?*. Matthew picked it up from his brother, Allan.

"He was the one who got more into American folksingers, before I did. He sang that song several years ago. It's not necessarily a traditional song, it's not as if it's age-old, but it sounds like one. It's amazing. That song sounds like it could easily be 300 years old. But Norman Blake wrote it not that long ago. I love the song, I love murder ballads, and I was on a real murder ballad kick with this record, if it's not obvious [the other being *Fair Ellen*].

"It has that same lyrical aesthetic that I love about all the other songs that have unknown writers. I guess what happens sometimes, too, is that a song kind of winds its way into my live set and the response I get from the audience suggests that maybe it's worth recording. That's certainly what happened with that one. I was playing it live, and every second or third time that I'd play it I'd have someone come up to me and say, 'My god, I never hear that any more. I used to hear that all the time. That's a beautiful song'. And I'm thinking, 'Well, Jesus, you should be hearing it all the time, that's a great song!'

"Same with *Gray Funnel Line*. This might sound like a pompous thing







Matthew Byrne

to say, I have never heard the version of *Gray Funnell Line* that made me feel like, 'Oh, I'd never record that, that's the definitive one'. Sometimes I have. I'm not going to go out and record *The Blacksmith*. I mean, Andy Irvine would be rolling his eyes if I did. Sometimes there's a seminal version where I'm like, 'You know what, that's not my place to bring something new to the table. That's really been beautifully done.'. Other times I feel like I can."

**M**atthew's father and mother were both born on Placentia Bay, NL, Joe in the village of Great Paradise and Linda in the more isolated community of Kingwell. Both their families were part of the federal and provincial governments' resettlement program, which was initiated between 1954 and 1975, due to unemployment created mainly by the modernization of the fishing industry. As a result, more than 300 communities were abandoned and 30,000 people moved to large urban centres such as St. John's.

"There are an awful lot of stories and songs that came out of Placentia Bay, that came with the people who left during resettlement," says Matthew. "All these people took their songs with them, and Mom actually did a lot of collecting when she was my age."

Joe and Linda would meet and marry in St. John's, where Allan and then Matthew were born. Subsequently, Joe and his brother, Pat, along with Baxter Wareham would occasionally perform their songs, gleaned from or written about Placentia Bay, in various settings around the city. Then in 1983, they self-financed the album *Towards The Sunset*. Last August, the St. John's radio station K-Rock 97.5 asked its listeners to vote for the best Newfoundland album of all time. *Towards The Sunset* came in at 21 out of 50. Paying tribute, the station's Chris Batstone wrote: "The songs here are deeply personal. Themes vary from the decline of the fishery to...the mass resettlement of the 1960s. The album is sparse and to the point, featuring very little in the way of instrumentation. One of the finest examples of topical, educated, poignant, and socially relevant songs in Newfoundland music. These songs have become anthems and have influenced a generation of Newfoundland music."

The fine St. John's singer Jean Hewson considers herself among them. "Towards the Sunset was one of the first albums of original songs that was written in the traditional vein in Newfoundland," says Hewson. "I think it had an impact on local musicians because it meant that traditional music was no longer just a collection of dusty museum pieces chronicling days gone by. Traditional music could be current and relevant to the here and now. We could write songs and tunes about the things that were happening in the present using the musical styles of the past. That's what that album means to me."

The Byrnes and Wareham became minor celebrities and toured throughout the country performing at such events as the Atlantic and Mariposa folk festivals. On occasion, they brought along the legendary Newfoundland fiddler Rufus Guinchard. And amidst all this excitement, Matthew was born in 1984.

"Growing up with dad being a performer...and mom being a singer as well...that meant their friends were musicians. All their contemporaries were of the same ilk. Every gathering was based around music in a very pure form. It was very common for me as a child to be under foot, as dad would say. Fifteen adults would be sitting around in the living room sharing traditional songs and singing unaccompanied in a circle. I didn't realize until I was older how unique that was."

"I was never the type of child who was rushed off to bed when the adults were around. I was part of all of that, so it just became normal to be surrounded by music all the time. It was so normal that whenever you got together, it was understood that it would just develop into a few songs, whether you'd be playing or singing or whatever. Just sharing songs was the most common thing. That's the kind of social atmosphere I was bred into. It was inevitable that I would have it in my genes. It was just a matter of when I got old enough to know what I valued and cared about, whether that was going to be something that I would take an interest in and pursue."

Both Joe and Pat Byrne later earned university degrees and wound up teaching at Memorial University. Baxter Wareham became a high school teacher. The torch then passed to Allan, and he picked up the guitar and excelled. So the bar was immediately set high for Matthew. He, however, initially took to the mandolin and could be frequently found blissfully wandering around the neighbourhood knocking out a tune or two. When he eventually picked up a guitar, he wasn't about to settle for a casual thrash at a weekend party.

"I was like, if I'm going to learn this stuff, I'm going to learn it right. Dad's playing was a big influence. Dad was such a clean player, every



Joe Byrne Pat Byrne and Baxter Wareham



ring was given its fair play. There was none of this just banging it out. That's why my first playing was very precise, even at an early age. I was going for precision and the delicate touch. That has served me well. I had that intuition and the need to be that way really early on. I tend to be a very clean, soft, delicate player. No need to put me in the pub on a Friday night, 'cause you'll never hear me."

**W**hile fashioning a serious reputation as a traditional singer around St. John's, it still took Matthew until 2010 before he felt prepared to record *Ballads*. To help ease his way into this recording, he recruited multi-instrumentalist Billy Sutton from the band Shanneyganock as producer. And the first song they tackled together was *The Banks of Newfoundland*, which would provide a creative breakthrough for Matthew.

"The arrangement is as good as anything I did on that record. I really like it and it doesn't sound like a first try. The other thing is that I'm taking that I took from hearing unaccompanied—Mom sung it for years and years completely cross-handed—and I did my own arrangement. It's something I do quite a bit now but at the time it was new territory for me. I was still getting over the idea that I was allowed to do that when you first get into this, because of some of the purist reactions. In the trad' music world, you're kind of thinking, 'Oh, is this going to be going against the grain?'. Now, if I want to take a song and take it wherever I want, and make it sound completely unlike it sounds when I first heard it, I'm fine with that. At the time, though, I kind of felt like I was really testing new waters."

*Ballads* justifiably earned Matthew widespread national approval, which led to an audition with The Dardenelles, with whom he now plays alongside Aaron Collis (button accordion), Emily Bartellas (bodhran/percussion) and host of CBC Radio's *Deep River* Tom Power (guitar/vocals). Collis and Bartellas also play as a duo, featured in P.E. No. 62.

All of which gives the impression that interest in traditional music is undergoing a resurgence among young Newfoundland musicians. "There isn't a young girl back home that doesn't play fiddle," says Matthew. "I think it's part of the resurgence in the interest in folk music in general everywhere. It could just be because pop music has become so shitty, and they're looking for something else. I think it's also because the Internet has made folk and trad' music so much more accessible than it ever was before. Young ears are hearing what old ears have heard for years. And I think that this access to the music has really provided the interest."

it ever was before. Young ears are hearing what old ears have heard for years. And I think that this access to the music has really provided the interest."

Still, for my money, The Dardenelles, with Matthew Byrne onboard, are arguably the most accomplished traditional band Newfoundland has produced since Noel Dinn first rounded up Figgy Duff. Fabulous musicians all, The Dardenelles, and with enough good taste to leave well alone the standard bar-room ranting that indulged so many of their predecessors. Their current album, *The Eastern Light*, is an absolute gem. As well it should be with the great Irish guitarist John Doyle as its producer. It features Byrne singing on four tracks, the songs selected by group consensus.

"The stuff that happens with The Dardenelles happens really organically," says Matthew. "Usually it just comes from them striking up an interest in something that I've played. We'll be looking for something slow, something fast, or whatever...and the ones that we go with are the ones that everyone seems to be into collectively."

"There were songs on [*hearts & heroes*] I was thinking would be Dardanelle songs. We just never really got around to them, or they never seemed to really pique the same interest. So I said, 'Alright, cool, I'll do them myself'. I'd love to do *Bold Nelson* with The Dardenelles live, and I'd love to do *The Plains of Waterloo* and *The Jolly Plough Boy*, and the ones that just lend themselves to a band formation."

Which all bodes well for the future of Matthew Byrne. It may even convince him to give up his day job at Memorial University, overseeing online correspondence courses, and to take his music, erm...more seriously.

"I haven't given up the full-time paycheck yet," he says. "I'm taking a year's leave next year to officially play music full time. Luckily I have employers who are very respectful and encouraging of my musical career. I'm going to test the waters. I didn't sink a whole load of money into another record not to tour it more broadly. I want to make sure that's what I'll be able to do. I want to get down to the States a bit more, and do more festivals. A lot of the venues and festivals I've done with The Dardenelles I'm able to go back to. You can make a lot of inroads when you're playing in a band like that, have a connection with venues that, otherwise, probably wouldn't pay attention to you."

Oh, they'll pay attention now, Matthew. Trust me on that.



Dardenelles, L to R: Matthew Byrne, Rich Klaas, Tom Power, Aaron Collis and Emily Bartellas





Joan Baez

## The Penguin Eggs Interview

# Joan Baez

**J**oan Baez is in fine voice and company, reports Bruce Mason.

"I'm touring a lot and I've never enjoyed performing as much as right now," says Baez, at 73 years of age as popular as ever, world-wide. "In spring I performed in Latin America for the first time in decades and I've just returned from Europe, after a tour of the west coast of North America (and the Winnipeg Folk Festival), a year of extraordinary, positive, spiritual experiences."

Back in 2008, a landmark year, Baez was celebrating the 50th anniversary of her legendary debut at Club 47 in Cambridge, MA, and the 1959 Newport Folk Festival. Her 44th album, *Day After Tomorrow* (produced by Steve Earle) was nominated for a Grammy. The National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences—the organization that bestows that award—was presenting her with its highest honour: the

Lifetime Achievement Award. She had also earned the highest civilian honours given by France and Spain. And PBS American Masters was premiering the widely watched documentary *Joan Baez: How Sweet The Sound*.

Seven years later, on Nov. 17, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers conferred its singular, once-in-a-century awards for "incomparable accomplishments" to Baez, Garth Brooks, Billy Joel, Stephen Sondheim, and Stevie Wonder. ASCAP noted that Joan, "a teenaged folksinging sensation, became a major artist with a passion for human rights and social justice and remains a musical force of nature whose influence is incalculable, from marching on the front line of the civil rights movement with Martin Luther King, introducing Bob Dylan to the world, and inspiring Vaclav Havel's fight for a Czech Republic".

As U.S. mid-term election results came in, she was preparing for a mini-tour of Missoula MT, Bellingham and Seattle, WA, and Vancouver, BC, dates she missed last summer because of laryngitis. Bruce Mason spoke with her about one of the most distinctive and celebrated careers and voices in music.

**"I**'ve always tried to postpone concerts rather than cancel them. It's something I've had to do only about 15 times over the years. My voice is fine but work like hell on it, after a recent crisis.

"There was nothing physically wrong with my throat but the vocal chords are getting older. I'd listen to something I did years ago and think, 'Shit, I wish I could sound like that again'. A therapist told me I was blocking the sound of a new voice. I've lost some of the high register but I'm more comfortable and actually prefer it. Some singers my age have vibrato that's very wide, out of control, and it's very attractive. I avoid that.

"My voice is a gift—but I have to maintain and develop it—and so is my desire to share. That's brought me the most satisfaction.

"This may not be exciting but I've led a disciplined life. I've taken care with my diet, exercise, and meditation. We don't get to choose how we're going to die, or when. But we can decide how we're going to live. For me, that doesn't include violence and the longer practice that and the meditation needed, I find more intelligence in any situation."

Your accompanist, Dirk Powell, says: "We've been all over the world and she can be at home anywhere. She brings something spiritual and powerful and loves music and dancing." And your guitar tech, Grace Stumberg, has been blogging about myriad adventures, ranging from dancing until the wee hours and Dirk cooking Cajun dishes in hotel rooms in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

"Yes, the joy is back. There were four sold-out performances in London's Royal Festival Hall, several days in Dublin, 10 days in Paris, with six standing-room-only concerts at L'Olympia, performances in former Soviet countries, with young audiences whose parents had lived through Communist rule.

"I judge performances by how fidgety the audience is and my job is to keep it interesting—that's the trick. I no longer have the power all by myself, but my son Gabriel, Dirk, and Grace—who is now my backup singer—are onstage with me when I'm not performing solo.



"She makes it possible to include duets like *Catch the Wind* that I used to sing with my sister, Mimi. In France, they know all the words to *Diamonds and Rust* but few have heard my biggest hit, *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down*. As a four-piece band we're able to add material that's familiar, including songs in Spanish and French, languages I've had time to improve on.

"I felt guilty about being away from Gabe when he was young. Now we're together, sharing meals and the stage. He's always been a great percussionist but he's constantly improving providing backup. And Dirk—my music machine with a big heart—plays seven instruments, including piano. God gave him an overdose of talent that adds so much. It's all fun."

**Earlier this year you were quoted: "This world is fucking falling apart, and I don't think it even matters who's quibbling with who. Global warming is going to get us and that's going to be it. That's something I don't want to say around young people." What do you think today?**

"It's sad, but since then my ex, David Harris, spoke to our granddaughter's class of 10-year-olds. He told them the world may be uninhabitable by the time they are 40. And guess what. Knowing that didn't kill them. No one died. And a few decided to fight climate change. "Some tired arms still beat drums. As for 'roots on the ground', we've always had finer rather scanning everywhere, like we did in the beginning of Vietnam. We haven't learned from past mistakes.

"Today, there are a million issues and causes and the right is rising with all its meanness, selfishness, and ignorance of poverty. In the U.S., Tea Party victories seem to be, in part, a reaction to a first black president. Obama is the only politician I ever endorsed but the glow left when he entered office, a disappointment who briefly offered hope to the world and maybe should have led a movement instead.

"However, I'm past living the myth of being Joan Baez and all that shouting. Got demons out and learned to enjoy life, which now includes painting, another source of joy.

"Don't get me wrong. Not being able to do the things that I wanted to do would have been a real sacrifice. I still haven't reached where I want to be but I no longer talk about politics and have to be at benefits all the time. Just talking onstage to share my voice seem in itself to be enough of a statement.

"Little victories and big defeats has become my credo. If we recognize what it is we're up against we can still function and be decent and

compassionate. Maybe that's the best that can happen right now.

"I'm often asked who I listen to and about the next release. Well, rodents have destroyed the wiring in my house and the stereo is silent. I spend my time at home painting but there are lots of suggestions for new material and I want the next album to be even better than the last. In the meantime, my voice will tell me when it's time to stop. Until then I will keep on singing, live."

During our conversation, I mentioned Joan on my way to my 50th high school reunion. "Be brave," she advised. "And look for a button I once saw that read, 'It's OK. I don't recognize you either'".

In concert, she is a witty raconteur with endless anecdotes and a killer impression of "Bobbie Dylan, singing Joan Baez". In conversation, she uses humour disarmingly, to amuse herself and the listener and says that quality is one that she admired in her closest friend, Martin Luther King Jr. Once, when she was asked to go to his motel room and awaken him, she sang *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* into his ear. "I am hearing angels," he responded with eyes closed. "Sing another one, Sister Joan."

The *New York Times* observed in 2008: "Ms. Baez' sense of humour has always been her saving grace. Just when she began to seem intimidatingly high and mighty, her jokes, delivered with a sweet, goofy smile, bring her back to earth, where she is needed as much as ever."

She recently lost three key figures in her life. On the death of her beloved mother—affectionately known as Big Joan—at 100 years of age, Joan said: "I had asked her what she wished for and she replied, 'To drop dead'. Well, she got that."

Mourning the passing of her greatest mentor,

Pete Seeger, in January 2013, she recalled a first life-changing concert by him as "a vaccine, that worked".

When a journalist speculated that she was probably the only person to have seen both Bob Dylan and Steve Jobs naked, Baez said: "But not at the same time".

She first met the late co-founder of Apple—a neighbour and eventually a lover—when he requested a piano lesson after purchasing a very expensive Bosendorfer piano. In the big, empty rotunda of his house there was no other furniture. He couldn't play a note and she explained that middle C was the only one she could locate. "He had a very sweet side, even if he was as ... err ... erratic as he was famous for being," she wrote in one of her two best-selling autobiographies. "When I asked him how it felt to have changed the world, he replied: 'OK'."

Does she stay in contact with her famous former boyfriend. "Has anyone ever been in touch with Bob Dylan?" she wonders.

One of the most amusing Baez stories concerns the Martin 0-45 she purchased in 1959, which is now on display at the Smithsonian. When the guitar company studied it to reissue a special commemorative edition, employees found a note hidden inside—"Too bad, you're a Commie"—from someone who repaired it years earlier. Martin duplicated the note in all 59 models, which immediately sold out.

When I asked her about leaping from obscurity to the front page of *Time* at age 18 in 1962, she recalled that the magazine mentioned cartoonist Al Capp's caricature of her as "Joanie Phonie". "A stupid, vulgar satire of the anti-war movement," she said, demanding a retraction at the time. "I wish I had the sense of humour then that I have now. It really makes me laugh today."



Joan Baez and Bob Dylan



# Reviews



**67** Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters



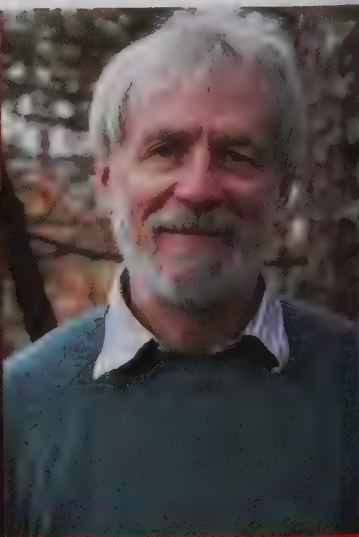
**59** Leonard Cohen



**55** Kiran Ahluwalia



**67** Kaia Kater



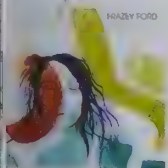
**65** Jesse Winchester





## Frazey Ford

Indian Ocean (Nettwerk)



Strange on the surface, the idea of pairing ex-Be Good Tanyas singer Frazey Ford with the Hi Rhythm section is actually quite brilliant. Not only does Frazey have the kind of idiosyncratic phrasing that assistant Leroy, keyboardist Charles, and guitarist Teenie Hodges are used to from years backing Al Green, but the Memphis-based band of brothers also ground Ford's often stream-of-consciousness lyrical musings (*Three Golden Trees*, *Natural Law*) in a mellow but relaxed groove.

There are plenty of intimations in *Indian Ocean* of a relationship gone wrong (especially in *Done*) perfect soul music fodder, though Frazey never once goes for the easy retro route that usually happens in these pairings, underplaying the horns and keeping the mood mysterious. Last-minute album of the year?

— By Tom Murray

## The Alt

The Alt (Under the Arch Records)



Any group with the lineup of master guitarist, singer, songwriter, and producer John Doyle; flautist,

singer, and songwriter Nuala Kennedy; and singer, guitarist, and bouzouki player Eamon O'Leary has to be checked out immediately! This Irish supergroup's debut is an album of traditional Irish songs and tunes—most of which has had a considerable impact on the folk music of North America. As you'd expect from players and singers of such high calibre, the performances are flawless and exciting. The instrumental work is dexterous and commanding while the singing and vocal harmonies are impeccable. *The Geese In The Bog/Covering Ground* set showcases the wonderful interplay between them with superb flute playing carrying the melody. The three voices blend wonderfully throughout, notably on *Willie Angler*. Another highlight is Kennedy's fine rendition of *Finn Waterside*. Doyle takes on *The 18th of June*, a song of the Napoleonic wars, to great effect. O'Leary leads the trio's a cappella version of *The Letter Song*, which is somewhat reminiscent of The Voice Squad in delivery. Essential stuff!

— By Tim Readman

## Kiran Ahluwalia

Sanata (Stillness)



Kiran Ahluwalia hasn't missed a beat with her recordings. From her self-titled debut to her latest, *Sanata: Stillness*, the singer has had an unbroken run, exploring

new territory and developing her vocal capacities.

On her earlier albums, Kiran sought out and encouraged contemporary poets for her ghazals. On *Wanderlust*, she collaborated with renowned Portuguese guitarist Jose Manuel Neto, creating a flowing fusion of classical Indian and fado melody. But I wondered what in the world she would do to top the groundbreaking mashup with Tuareg musicians from the bands Tinariwen and Terakaft, resulting in the remarkable *Aam Zameen Common Ground*.

The answer turns out to be simply be herself.

Ahluwalia's voice is the freest it has ever been. It positively flies. As well, she has become her own poet, penning the lyrics to the majority of the songs here. Yet what I also love about this album is hearing her band step forward and take a major place in the proceedings. Many of the musicians have been with Ahluwalia on previous recordings but on *Sanata: Stillness* their efforts have gelled into a resilient and powerful whole.

Kiran Thakrar is a genius of the harmonium. His approach to that instrument is unlike any other I've heard. He makes it sound limitless in what it can do. Nitin Mitta's tabla is passionate, driving. But most exciting to me was Rez Abbasi's guitar.

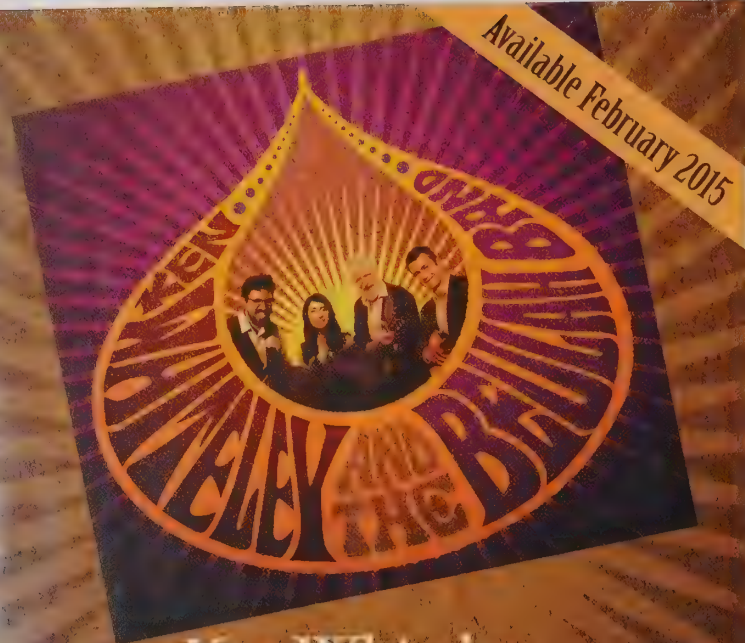
Abbasi has been the soul of the sensitive accompanist to Kiran's variously changing vocals but here he is equally part of the show. Ahluwalia states that she was impelled to incorporate the guitar-driven approach of Tuareg music. Here, Abbasi provides the guitar work previously given by Tinariwen, and adds his own free approach, creating musical space and unleashing his own powerful volley of notes.

The album opener, *Hayat*, pulls us in with Ahluwalia's voice compressed and an insistent guitar riff, until it bursts into a throbbing psychedelic desert blues. *Jaane Na* has Ahluwalia's voice skimming over lightning-fast riffs





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on harmonium, and rabbit-run tabla. Production values, also Abbasi's realm, are clear, placing Ahluwalia's voice in the centre of events, with shifting effects providing multi-dimensions to the songs. This is a beautifully realized album.

– By Lark Clark

## The Duke Robillard Band

Calling All Blues! (Stony Plain)



There's no denying Duke's genius with his guitar, his innate

ability to blend blues classics with well-crafted originals, his prolific schedule of releases and live shows and his talent in aligning himself with exceptional musicians—but could someone bigger than me please tell him he shouldn't sing? To his credit, 30-some albums later, Duke's found more than a few inventive ways to mask his infamous croak—most notably with the delightful Sunny Crownover. Her slick lead vocal on the scintillating *Blues Beyond The Call Of Duty* turns in the disc's strongest track while she tones Duke's vocals down on *Nasty Guitar*, a song in which he peels off a lethal example of why this title is apt. The jazzy *Confusion Blues* showcases longtime band member Bruce Bears, with a most convincing Mose Allison impersonation in both jump piano and vocal stylings. All the usual treats you've come to expect from a Duke release are here, from the swinging gait of *Down In Mexico*, with stellar support from Bruce Bears (B3) and slick wall of horns (Rich Lataille, Mark Earley, Doug Woolverton), to the rockin', rollin', piano-based boogie of *I'm Going To Quit My Baby* and the soulful, full-band cover of *Emphasis On Memphis*. Another standout track is Duke's tribute to Frankie Lee Sims's '40s-era Texas country-blues, the meaty *Motor Trouble*, his vocals double-tracked to complementary effect over

this tough-sounding, single-chord boogie drop-kicked by Mark Teixeira's crunchy beat. Experimental songs such as the darkly threatening *Svengali* and the truly odd mash-up of jazz-to-rock in *Temptation* (with standout bass from Brad Hallen and Miles-esque trumpet from Woolverton) explains why no dust falls on M. Robillard, ripe with surprises and unstoppable, signature solos.

– By Eric G. Thom

## The Mackenzie Blues Band

Slam! Bam! (Independent)



For their sophomore release, all seen in order for the young band.

Money has clearly been spent to package and polish the image, but up the brand and streamline the production, yet it falls victim to that most basic of faults—a shortage of quality songs. Despite the promising gospel opener, *Down With Love* reveals a strong guitar hook doubling as a song idea. Despite her classical training, lead singer Tara Mackenzie doesn't play her vocals with strength or conviction while brother/guitarist Trevor, seems the heart of the band. More guitar excursion than song, *Sweet Stuff* plays equally lean, despite its harp and sax additions. But wait—this album starts with the exceptional *Bone Cage*, an absolute re-invention of the band and its sound. Dark, sinister, downright ominous, the singer bursts from her chrysalis with raw power as her band huddles around her, her more powerful lower register building tension and intrigue. More rock than blues, they play as one on the equally adventurous *On the Other Side*, the vocals somewhat off course redeemed through the use of percussion and tasty, Santana-esque B3 for a larger sound. Another key pivot point comes with the somewhat menacing *I Feel A Storm Coming*, a tasty, extended jam leaning on effects-laden guitar.

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Ewan McLennan

and harp as the singer works the murky atmosphere within an inch of her life—a powerhouse vocalist as it turns out. *Higher Road* offers surprising pop touch with its tight backup vocal support, perky bass, and Walter Becker-inspired guitar—which only goes to show that this band positively reeks of potential yet seem lost in the ether of their own desire to establish a voice. It's there in fits and starts but in real need of a good producer to help them find their way.

— By Eric G. Thom

## Ewan McLennan

Stories Still Untold (Fellside Recordings)

Ewan McLennan's career has developed well since winning the 2010 BBC2 Horizon Award. His third CD features both contemporary and traditional songs including pieces from his Scottish homeland, as well as Irish, English, and North American songs as well as originals. Guest musicians include Ross Ainslie (whistle), Beth Porter (cello), Inge Thomson (accordion), Lauren MacColl (viola), and Siobhan Miller (backing vocals).

Producer Mattie Foulds keeps things fresh and spontaneous by maintaining a live-off-the-floor feel. McLennan's immaculate guitar playing, strongly influenced by his classical training, holds the songs together while his singing is rich and carries the stories well.

— By Tim Readman

## Evalyn Parry

To Live in the Age of Melting: Northwest Passage (Independent)



The EP release, *To Live in the Age of Melting: Northwest Passage*, is 20-minute single track that combines song, storytelling, essay, theatre, editorial, memoir, and homily wrapped in a loop of the chorus of Stan Rogers's *Northwest Passage* and finished out with verses from *Lady Franklin's Lament*. Parry uses several conceits to deliver her message, starting with the passage of the vagus nerve through the body, comparing it to the Northwest Passage as a vagus nerve through the continent. The performance touches on both the adventure and the folly of the Franklin Expedi-

tion, asking the question, "What is discovery?". Does putting your name on a spot on the map mean you've discovered it?

The EP describes the plight of native people in the onslaught of the passage of European peoples through the land and then asks the question of what becomes of the northern lands when the ice starts to melt. The extended essay ends with an admonition to find our own Northwest Passages in order to connect with one another and with the land. That's a lot of message to put into a single 20-minute track and in general it succeeds. The wording is occasionally a little heavy handed but there's a nice symmetry to the imagery and the haunting theatrical presentation works well as a method of delivery.

— By Gene Wilburn

## Vance Joy

dream your life away (Atlantic Records)



Vance Joy, born James Keogh, is an Australian singer-songwriter who signed his first album deal with Atlantic Records in 2013. The record company obviously expects big things from the photogenic Joy as two of the songs from this debut disc are already on YouTube and he's touring as the opener for Taylor Swift this year, likely to maximize his exposure to the teenage girls they expect to be his audience. In fairness to the lad, he sings and harmonizes well and the songs are punchy and upbeat with strong hooks, though how much of that is Mr. Joy and not the multiple producers and recording engineers that stud the disc is debatable. As would be expected with a disc aimed at a younger audience, there's nothing very deep in the lyrics. It's mostly relationship stuff but pleasant and listenable and the musicianship is solid. As a product, it's well made but one wonders about the direction of the art and sincerity of the inspiration.

— By Barry Hammond

## James Hill

The Old Silo (Borealis Records)



If you thought James Hill was simply the ukulele wunder-kind, his latest album will convince you that he is also a great songwriter.

Over the last three albums, Hill's work has evolved, with less spotlight on the uke pyrotechnics and more on the songwriting. On *Promenade* he writes, "If I were a dead man, you'd be my outline. If I were an outlaw, you'd be my moonshine". On *The Brightest Lights* he asks: "Don't the brightest lights cast the darkest shadows?". It gets even better on *If Wishes Were Horses*, where he sings: "Her eyes were as blue as a Hank Williams song and her voice like an old lullaby".

With Joel Plaskett producing and contributing instrumental chops, Hill also takes the uke into new territory: rock'n'roll. On the first couple of songs he's got his baritone uke plugged into what sounds like a Vibrolux amp turned up to 10, and at one point he even plays slide ukulele, believe it or not. There are mellower tunes that venture into other grooves, including country and swing, but all 10 tracks are united by great writing.

— By Mike Sadava





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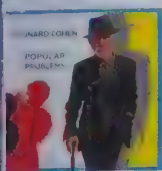


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## Leonard Cohen

Popular Problems (Sony)

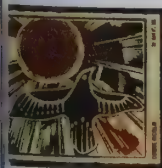


Given the fact that he's been known to take his time between visits to the studio, two albums in three years feels like a late-period deluge from Mr. Cohen, and by late 1980s he was 80 years old last September. Aside from this unprecedented prodigious output, it may be too much at this stage to expect big surprises. Backed by austere (at times chintzy) accompaniment largely conceived by producer Patrick Leonard, Cohen breathes his sculpted verses in a gravelly purr little altered since 1988's *I'm Your Man*, still captivated after all these years by the deep sensuality of the transient world through which he continues to stride, his eyes still clear. He also continues to shine in his own shoes, as depicted in the insert photography. Songs such as *Did I Ever Love You* and *My Oh My*—pretty much all of them, actually—are certainly of a sonic piece with the last few decades of Cohen albums. *Popular Problems* won't rank as a point of entry for impatient Cohen fans but it certainly won't do anything to make the existing ones love him any less.

— By Scott Lingley

## Catherine MacLellan

The Raven's Sun (Independent)



Labelled a new discovery by *Penguin Eggs* in 2008, we now cut to an artist in mid-career and living up to the hype. *The Raven's Sun* is Catherine's fifth and, I think, her best work to date.

In her bio Catherine says, "I was born to do this, and my father [the late Gene MacLellan] taught me the ways of a songwriter". And so he did.

*The Raven's Sun* is a collection of 11 strong songs delivered effortlessly, sparsely, and beautifully with only guitarist Chris Gauthier and a few touches of violin here

and there...just the right amount of spice. Musical chemistry at its finest.

I particularly loved *Beneath the Lindens*:

"I draw the outline of a tree and I see memories of me / As a young girl in a small town, underneath the linden trees / I drew pictures, I wrote poems, I spent all my time alone / 'neath the lindens in the graveyard, close by my mother's home

Well my voice it had a closed door, there was a closed door to my heart / I liked the quiet of my own time, liked the view from far apart / But you saw me in the shadows, and you brought me to the light / And I listened as you taught me all the new things I could like"

*The Raven's Sun* is a lovely, lovely piece of work.

— By les siemieniuk

## Fish & Bird

Something in the Ether (Fiddle Head Records)



What struck me first about Fish & Bird, more than the individual instrumental mastery or the lyrics or the ravishing vocal melodies, is the absolute cohesion of the band. The agile, assured, telepathic intermeshing of the players—

considerable source of pleasure to me before I ever had a chance to admire the beauty and wit of the parts. Banjo, fiddle, acoustic bass (I really dig Zoe Guigueno's playing all over this record) and electric guitar entwine behind Taylor Ashton's sometimes-wry, sometimes-soaring vocals, backstopped by apt, sensitive drumming. So no matter how wistful they sound on the opener *Cold Salty*, no matter how it lilts, the music still has some balls, a sense of momentum and direction that couldn't be assembled with Pro Tools. This is lithe, smart, memorable music that continues to unfold over repeated listenings, by folks who sound like they were born to make it.

— By Scott Lingley

## Allison Lupton

Half My Heart (Independent)



This is singer and flute player Allison Lupton's third disc, following *My True Love* (2001) and *Fly Like Swallows* (2007). Having gotten her start in Killiecrankie, who played regularly on CBC's *Max Ferguson Show*, her now-un-named band contains several veteran players such as Ian Bell, Denis Rondeau, Grand North American Fiddle Champion Shane



Photo by: Kris Posar

Allison Lupton

Cook, and CCBA's Mandolin Player of the Year Andrew Collins. In 2008 she was nominated for the Traditional Singer of the Year category by the Canadian Folk Music Awards and has performed on *The Vinyl Cafe*, as well as recently being named musician in residence at McDougall Cottage in Cambridge, ON. The disc is a confident, self-produced, comfortable blend of traditional music and traditional-sounding originals perked up on occasion by a horn section (The Always All Star Horns). Lupton has a very fine, clear voice and the musicianship



Fish & Bird



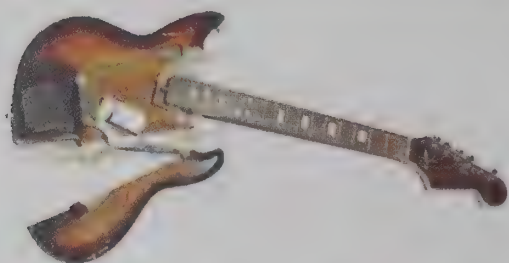
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— By Barry Hammond

**Mike Vass**

*In the Wake of Neil Gunn* (Unroofed Records)



Neil Gunn was leading writer of the Scottish Renaissance of

the 1920s and '30s who voyaged around the Western Isles, using the experience as an inspiration for his writing. Acoustic music composer and fiddler Mike Vass replicated Gunn's trip this year and composed a new suite of music reflecting his experience of visiting destinations such as Duntulm, Skye, and Portnalong. The idea came to Vass while recovering in hospital from a brain injury, where he delved into Gunn's novel *Off in a Boat*. Guest musicians include Innes Watson, Hamish Napier, Jennifer Port, and Euan Burton. There's a blend of pure acoustic sounds of guitar, fiddle, flute, and the like with subtle grooves and electro sounds. The result is an intriguing mix that suggested shades of what Mike Oldfield may have come out with, if his oeuvre had been trip-hop rather than prog rock.

— By Tim Readman

**Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge**

*Avalon* (Modern Lore)



The cover photo of this disc is a composite of Julian Lage and Chris Eldridge, one image overlaid on the other. It's hard to see who belongs to which hands, or which head goes with which shirt, and indeed, the music on this disc continues in that vein—they play so closely together it is as if the two minds have become one. It's unreal. Check out just the first few bars of *Open Up the Window*, *Noah* or the entry to *Wilson's Waltz*. You just don't see this level

of synergy very often. Perhaps almost never. It's just outrageously good, yet presented modestly and playfully.

It's easy to overstate the influence of Tony Rice on the world of flatpick guitar, and his name is mentioned too easily. Still, in this case, the players are paying an oblique tribute to him. The groove on *Mean Mother Blues* sounds like Rice, the rising chromatic run is classic Rice. They cover Norma Blake's *Ginseng Sullivan*, which Rice has said is his favourite Blake song.

Both Lage and Eldridge are so capable, and so engaged, that they can extend many of the ideas that Rice had raised throughout his career. As Rice, they take up pieces that are very, very simple as with *Whiskey Before Breakfast* and do things with them that are as profound as they are unexpected.

*Avalon* is no doubt one of the very best things we'll hear this year.

— By Glen Herbert

**Big Dave McLean**

*Faded But Not Gone* (Black Hen Music)



As tired and worn as the genre itself, we're getting older

and death proves the ultimate expression of our fragile mortality. Fortunately, Big Dave—never the poster boy for healthy living—is still here to chronicle the inevitable, yet the recent passing of his dear parents and a brother lends legitimate pain to his performance. Circle the wagons with high-calibre help such as player/producer Steve Dawson (guitars, banjo, lap steel), Gary Craig (drums), John Dymont (bass) and Kevin McKendree (keyboards). Toss in backup support from the angelic McCrarys, Colin Linden and Pat James and you've got yourself a full-fledged party that brings out the absolute best in Big Dave. A good deal of his appeal has always been his legitimate rough edges, yet, in Dawson's care, McLean's game is all the better for its go-



her backdrop. From the low-down blues of *Tough Times* to the highly autobiographical *I Best Choose To Pick The Blues*, McLean is up to all challenges. Shining brightest in songs veering closest to Tom Waits's turf, his rough-hewn rasp of a voice suits *Sitting on a Fence* perfectly while his cover of Waits's own *Mr. Siegal* marks a high point. His cover of Ray LaMontagne's *Devil in the Jukebox* is another brilliant stroke, embraced by McKendree's burbling B3, Craig's crisp beat and Dawson's lethal slide work. Whether accenting McLean with elements of swing (*Dead Cat On The Line*), country (*The Fallen*) and gospel (*Oh—Mr. Charlie—Oh*), Big Dave proves he's far from gone. Whether turning his harsh grace to address tender tributes (*The Fallen*, *Hades of Grace*) or going for the gusto—where it all began—with a solo performance of a Skip James classic (*Devil Got My Woman*), Big Dave has turned out one of his best releases.

— By Eric G. Thom

## The Irish Rovers

50 YEARS (Rover Records)



Fifty years—go figure—who would have thought? I forgot all about them in the last few years. Forgot how ever-present they were in my growing up and adulthood in Canada. Their body of work is impressive: Three TV series in Canada, numerous “charted singles”, when that was the way things were done. Tom Paxton’s bank account filled up from their version of *Wasn’t that a Party* and this album ... is number 41. In the course of 50 years, many musicians have come and gone through the Rovers lineup—the present version includes a son of an original member (Ian Millar, son of Joe) and Geoffery Kelly (Spirit of the West/Paperboys). *50 Years* is chock full of songs—73 to be exact. I was surprised how many of them I knew. I won’t go into the Rovers’



history; it’s in the lovely booklet that comes with the CD. But I do remember a Winnipeg folk festival in 1976 that was cold and miserable and the crowd sat shivering through performers that didn’t quite appreciate or adapt to the listening conditions. Then the Rovers hit the stage claiming, “You’ll all freeze to death if you don’t get up and sing and dance with us”. And we did. It was the perfect antidote to the weather and they were on fire...and we all left that show warmed up and feeling, well, royally entertained and respected as an audience with

fabulous memories to carry for years to come.

They burst into our consciousness in a different time, a time before the Internet, world music, alt-folk, Americana, and sang their hearts out. You don’t stick around for this long without doing it right. This collection is absolutely worth having. It is 50 years’ worth of fun—and I’ll bet you listen to it more than you think you will. There is something about these Canadian musicians and these mostly old Irish songs that make life better.

— By les siemieniuk



## Hot Rize

When I’m Free (Ten in Hand Records)



If you’re not excited to hear that Hot Rize has a new album out, then you should be. They are a defining band in the grand sweep of bluegrass, formed as a super group in a sense, though perhaps that only came after the fact. Tim O’Brien, Pete Wernick, Charles Sawtelle, and Nick Forster all maintained solo careers, and Hot Rize never seemed to tour or record with regularity, but the band was always something to look out for, or look forward to. They used a broader palette of musical colours, including electric instruments from time to time, and featuring Wernick’s phase-shifted banjo.

The strength of the ensemble, and the vast experience that the players brought to it, often was a reminder of just how good bluegrass music can be. They are also a reminder that, no matter how good the parts, the whole is an ensemble; these aren’t players that sit back and wait for their solo, rather they are constantly in tune and contributing to what’s going on. The voices dip in and out, circling around one another in *Sky*



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*Rider*, one of two instrumentals on this disc. The writing is strong—as on *Western Skies* and *You Were On My Mind*—as of course it would be given that O'Brien is one of the best writers in the genre. It may be their strongest release ever, and with 24 years since the last studio recording, it certainly doesn't come a moment too soon.

— By Glen Herbert

## JW-Jones

Belmont Boulevard (Blind Pig)



JW-Jones has always kept his eye on the prize and, seven albums

later, he's closer to it than ever before. Since his first release back in 2000, Jones has always mined vintage blues—a disciple of Junior Watson, Charlie Baty, and Jimmie Vaughan—from his tube amps right down to his measured coif and custom suits. Despite this positioning, he's been playing it the hard way, mapping out a style to truly call his own, which has reached its zenith with *Belmont Boulevard* on the grown-up Blind Pig label. Produced by Tom Hambridge, who co-wrote and plays on many of the songs, Jones's perseverance has paid off, rising to the occasion to add Reese Wynans (keyboards), Rob McNelley (guitar), and Dave Roe (bass) to his regular lineup of Laura Greenberg (bass) and Jamie Holmes (drums). The tough, relaxed sound of *Love Times Ten* brims with attitude—a confident first step which makes the most of Jones's vocal range. Likewise, the late Bobby Parker's *Watch Your Step* gets a tasty update—all meat, no potatoes. Yet, it's songs like Hambridge's *Coming After Me* (suggesting the thrill's far from gone) and the co-written *Don't Be Ashamed* (despite a thin vocal) which reveal a meaner, nastier JW for all the right reasons. His own hearty *Thank You* and the near-frenzied *Magic West Side Boogie* serve notice that JW's quest for recognition of his capability is now behind

him. Note that inconsistencies remain—Jones's vocals can occasionally take away from the whole (*Blue Jean Jacket*, *What Would Jimmie Do?*). At the same time, the oddly successful draw of *If I Feels Good Tomorrow* suggests entirely different potential with crossover pop or country feel. An admirable cover of Buddy Guy's *What's Inside of You* underlines considerable growth as a guitarist and his comfort zone is clearly audible. With *Belmont Boulevard* the Ottawa native declares himself to be a contender.

— By Eric G. Thom

## Fathead

Fatter Than Ever (Electro-Fi)



Fathead is a reliable collection of great players with proven track record, their considerable chemistry an undeniable piece of Canadian blues bedrock. Their allure is best realized onstage—each musician galvanized around lead singer John Mays, adding electricity to their homemade groove which takes the best of blues and R&B whipping many a dance floor in a sweaty frenzy. It's all about personality and Fathead has it in spades. Their recorded legacy, falling behind the excitement levels of their live shows, Fathead nonetheless continues to mine classic blues, melding elements of swing, country, gospel, with R&B and rock'n'roll with the maturity and high level of musicianship they've cultivated since their beginnings 22 years prior. *Fatter Than Better* is no exception to these standards with the convincing, somewhat autobiographical opener *I Don't Want To Leave The Party*. They've started more than their share. The lyrically awkward *Johnny Says* is unquestionably one of the disc's most blistering tracks. The powerful shuffling motion driven by John Mays's lead vocal, Al Lerman's untouchable harp, Papa John King's refined guitar and the holy order of rhythm section



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Jon Brooks

tions, Bucky Berger (drums) and Omar Tunnoch (bass), transforms songcraft into raw energy. The thoughtful *Take A Little Time For Yourself* provides food for thought in the form of a jaunty, percussive rhythm and classic example of the high-quality musical stew these artists conjure each night. Skip right to *Evil Eye*—another of 15 originals—for a genuine, feel-good taste of what makes these guys so good. Observation. Humour. Heart and soulful abandon. Plus the musical chops to nail you to a wall. With 11 tracks to go, let the party start now.

— By Eric G. Thom

## Jon Brooks

The Smiling and Beautiful Countryside (Borealis)



Bob Snider has written that “the purpose of a song is to communicate ideas and feelings”. We don’t want to hear the phone book, or a biology text, and we don’t want answers, at least not in songs. We need some introspection, and the better songs are ones that take up smaller topics, that explore concepts that can be turned over a number of times in the space of three and half minutes.

That’s what I’m thinking as I listen to this latest release from Jon Brooks, as apparently he doesn’t agree. Over the course of the album he stuffs a lot in: wars and murders, seedy hotels and John Milton, the “bleeding moonlight” and Barber’s *Agnus Dei*. In *The Only Good Thing is an Old Dog* he asks “Why did Herostratus burn the Temple of Diana? Why did Nature spare Bourbon Street in Louisiana?”. (Anyone? Buelah?)

Each song is listed in the liner notes with an indication of where and when it was written: *Queen of the Hill* was written in Prince George, BC, in March 2014, *Felix Only* in Brooklyn, NY, May 2014. I’m not sure why that’s important, but it’s symbolic of his approach. He likes to pin things down. Eltros Saskatchewan, he tells us is “a flat town from which thwarted dreams are born”. Justin Bieber is loathsome, as are communists, and greed, and people who don’t pull over to let ambulances pass.

Yet for all the words—and there are lots and lots of them—what he doesn’t offer are ideas or feelings; he talks but he doesn’t communicate and the album remains as flat as Eltros, Saskatchewan. Wherever that is.

— By Glen Herbert

## Steve Strongman

Let Me Prove it To You (Independent)



Steve has little to prove at this point but for those who don’t already

know, he’s one of this country’s most talented—and most consistent—blues exports. Yet it would appear that, as fellow Hamiltonian Harrison Kennedy has done before him, Strongman has made a deal with the Devil. His latest album, his fifth release, was faced with the challenge of topping *Natural Fact*, an award-winning, all-original outing that set the bar for acoustic blues. He’s done it again, this time in a full blues-band setting. Smart writing, lethal slide guitar, confident vocals and 11 more fully accomplished songs,

*Let Me Prove It To You* is truly Strongman’s second coming. At the same time, it’s less a Steve Strongman record and more a band record, with Dave King/Adam Warner on drums, Alec Fraser/Mark McIntyre on bass, Jesse O’Brien on piano, Guy Bélanger guesting on harp, and the sweet backup vocals of Emma-Lee and Catherine Wallace.

A wickedly strong follow-up to his last wickedly strong follow-up, designed to remove your socks from your feet.

— By Eric G. Thom

## Annie Lou

Tried and True (Independent)



Annie Lou, which a few years ago was an all-female old-time quartet, has evolved to Anne Louise Genest’s solo project. Genest has also recently moved from a cabin in Yukon to Vancouver Island but this album still has the vibe of being written beside a wood stove, despite Andrew Collins’s sophisticated production and stellar musicianship by some of Toronto’s best.

Genest has made her name nationally in the old-time genre,

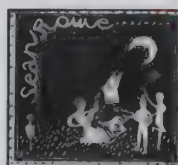
and she still has her roots there. There are songs about being the lost soldier, being home when the roses bloom, the river rising and, yes, the trauma of leaving the cabin for the city.

But she has also branched out a bit here, with some mighty fine country songs. *Haunted*, which she sings in duet with bassist Max Heineman and backed up by steel guitar wizard Burke Carroll, and lines such as, “You’d be the oyster and I’d steal the pearls” is as good of a country tear jerker as I’ve heard for ages. With a clear voice you can never grow tired of, Annie Lou and a wood stove could help you get through the long winter.

— By Mike Sadava

## Sean Rowe

Madman (Anti-)



When you’ve got a voice like Sean Rowe’s you can do just about anything

you want with it. Chant, scream, intone prayers, sing the phone book, or just murmur sepulchral poetry like Leonard Cohen. On *Madman*, Rowe uses that warm baritone in the service of the sombre, mournful folk he’s usually known for (*It Won’t Be Long*); scratchy, Waits-ian blues groove



Sean Rowe



with a tip o' the hat to Jim Osterberg (*The Real Thing*); and even blue-eyed soul (*Desiree*.) It all ties together around songwriting as deep and pleasurable as any of the philosophical life conundrums he presents in lyrics such as "Old Mr. Crow / tell me what do you know / when to steal and when to dive / one day my little man / won't fit in my hands" (*My Little Man*.) Did I mention that he's an honest-to-God naturalist as well, peppering songs with demands such as "Let a walnut tree replace me / Give my body back to the birds" (*Mad-man*)? If he decides to compose a Walden for the next generation, I'll be there to snap up a copy.

— By Tom Murray

**Graham Nicholas**

Sometimes Chicken, Sometimes Feathers  
(Independent)



Sometimes gristle as well, but there's hardly any of that in Ontario

singer/songwriter Graham Nicholas's third release, a pleasing though not particularly gripping set of country-rock tunes. Nicholas and his band have all the sonic moves down, though his lyrics fall flat a little too often, ("One-trick pony in a one-horse town" on *One Trick Pony*). Still he's a smooth little singer, the album is well produced and played, and if you just let the music and words wash over you—say, while doing the dishes—it all makes for decent background buzz.

— By Tom Murray

**Marcia Ball**

The Tattooed Lady and the Alligator Man  
(Alligator)



At age 65 or so, the ever-youthful Marcia Ball's lost none of her spunk, serving up an impressive menu of a dozen fresh originals, simmered in Louisiana hot sauce with a healthy slathering of East

Texas blues. Any rough edges heard are instantly forgiven by the youthful vigour of her convincing, controlled attack on her signature school of swamp-charged, piano-driven boogie and Austin-forged rock. Credit is due her choice of producer in Tom Hambridge and crackerjack band-mates in the mighty Mike Schermer (guitar), Damien Llanes (drums), Don Bennett (bass), and Thad Scott (tenor sax) with delightful drive-bys from Delbert McClinton, Red Young, Terrance Simien, and Roscoe Beck. For the most part, Ball applies ageless energy to deliver fun, raucous fare (*Clean My House, Like There's No Tomorrow*) yet she gets serious and extra soulful whenever the spirit or subject matter calls for it (*He's The One, The Squeeze Is On*). Her masterful strokes on piano are no better showcased than on the laid back *Lazy Blues* or, more authoritatively, on the title track. And you can't get enough of Schermer's lead guitar or the slick

contribution of Thad Scott and Mark Kazanoff's sax workouts, pushing Ball towards her full-bodied sound. The disc's crowning achievement is, however, felt most deeply on Ball's sincere, heartfelt prayer to the people in *Human Kindness*—a salve for our times, complimented by Young's B3 and the heavenly chorus of Shelley King, Carolyn Wonderland, and Amy Helm. Heart, passion and authenticity—Ball remains a forever firecracker of a singer, player and songwriter who chooses her moments wisely. The party just doesn't start without her.

— By Eric G. Thom

**Mélisande [électrotrac]**

Les Métamorphoses (La Prêche Libre)



This quote is on the CD cover of *Les Métamorphoses*: "Let our young musicians be inspired by traditional themes that have been collected, published, or that they



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discover themselves among the people. Let their imagination, their style and their creative spirit take them far in an adventurous career. When their day comes, we will lend an ear to hear their new creations.” – Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), from the preface of *En roulant ma boule*

This album may not be for those of you who love your traditional music locked in amber—a lovely reminder of the past preserved forever as it was. You know who you are. So to you I say, lighten up and partake in the journey. Méliande has embarked on with her electrobeat and funky up versions of these “chansons traditionnelles”. It’s fun. It’s really well done. And it brings a new spin to those wonderful pieces of music that have been passed down since who knows when.

Méliande is joined by Robin Boulianne (Yves Lambert, MAZ), Alexandre de Grosbois-Garand (Genticorum, Perdu l’Nord), and producer Mark Busic for this project. They do a great job with lively vocals and superb playing of guitars, banjos, mandolins, wooden flutes, and claviers under the contemporary programmed beats and techno stuff. I love the respect they show for the songs yet they are not afraid to turn them in unexpected directions.

This is a lovely record. The music is in good hands. Mr. Barbeau would be in the front row—grinning ear to ear.

– By les siemieniuk

## Runa

Current Affairs (Independent)



Runa is Shannon Lambert-Ryan (vocals), Fionán de Barra (guitar), Cheryl Prashker (percussion), Dave Curley (mandolin, vocals, bodhrán), and Maggie Estes (fiddle). Their repertoire includes traditional and contemporary Celtic material from Ireland, Scotland, Canada, and the United States. *Current Affairs* includes



Jesse Winchester

seven traditional songs, a couple of originals, and a few instrumentals. My favourite of the latter is *The Banks are Made of Marble*, featuring some fine fiddling and mandolin playing with suitably raucous accompaniment. The songs cover a few styles, from the trad *Wife of Usher’s Well* to the spiritual *Ain’t No Grave (that will hold my body down)*. Everything is performed with enthusiasm and zest and showcases the undoubted virtuosity of the band well. *Current Affairs* is a strong release from an extremely promising young band.

– By Tim Readman

## Jesse Winchester

A Reasonable Amount of Trouble

JESSE WINCHESTER  
A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TROUBLE



Considering he was already being treated for the cancer that would

eventually kill him back in April 2014, there’s remarkably little grief or anger to be felt in Jesse Winchester’s last batch of songs. Oh sure, there are a few characteristically melancholy numbers such as *Every Day I Get the Blues* and *Ghosts*, but they don’t sound like a man intent on railing against the night so much as making note of its eventuality. Winchester’s final album is less a requiem for

a life lived than it is a last gasp of life, packed full of admonitions to himself and his wife (*All That We Have is Now*) and his audience (*Never Forget to Boogie*). The latter isn’t one of his best efforts but it’s probably the only clunker in a set that also contains some remarkable doo-wop covers, *Rhythm of the Rain* and *Whispering Bells*, tracks that both evoke Winchester’s youth and show what a fine, soulful singer he was, even months before his death.

– By Tom Murray

## Alan Kelly Gang

The Last Bell (Blackbox Music)



The Alan Kelly Gang recorded *The Last Bell*, (subtitled *Rathcoole Sessions*) live. It’s a fine collection of original and traditional music, mainly instrumentals interspersed with four songs. It was produced by Manus Lunny of Capercaillie, who also contributes bouzouki, guitar, harmony vocals, and programming. The Gang members are from the west of Ireland and Scotland. They are Irishman Alan Kelly on piano accordion; Steph Geremia on flute, lead vocals, whistle, and soprano sax; fiddler Alasdair White; and guitarist Tony Byrne. The playing is strong and

dynamic and features driving rhythms and skilful lead instrumental play. Kelly’s piano accordion features strongly, proving once again he is a master at work.

– By Tim Readman

## Ryan Boldt

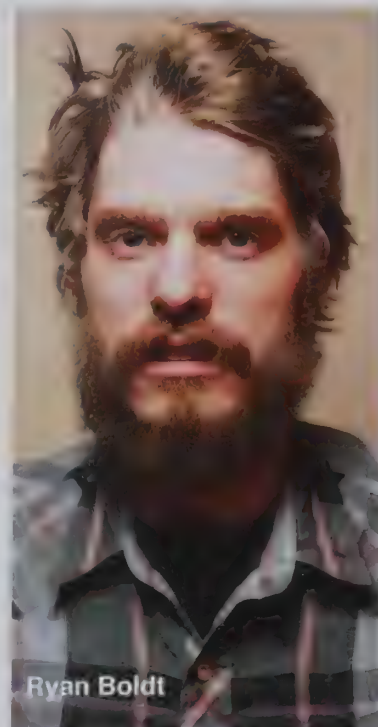
Broadside Ballads (Dahl Street Records)



Young master Boldt—the gloriously laconic voice of The Deep Dark

Woods—always said he’d make a tribute to his heroine, Shirley Collins. And for the most part here it is in all its frugal glory. Five of the nine songs come from Collins’s traditional cannon. And while it’s a bold and extraordinary move for such an established musician, it’s also a record riveting in its simplicity. Birds cheap, thunder peels, but mainly its Boldt and his guitars. The old spiritual, *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*, proves a welcome diversion, though, as it sways gently to the sweet, sweet rhythm of a clawhammer banjo, guitar, and mandolin.

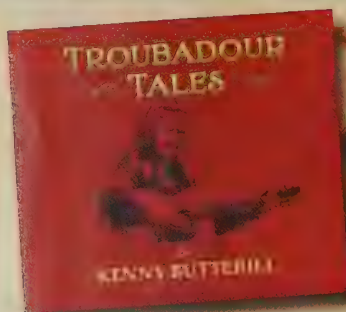
The dramatic electric guitar that opens the ballad *Poor Murdered Woman* certainly draws attention to the ominous tale at hand. *The Auld Triangle*, however, proves the most startling track of all. For years, The Dubliners’ lusty, un-



Ryan Boldt



ROOTS/AMERICANA/FOLK-BLUES/ALT-COUNTRY ARTIST AND PRODUCER



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# THANKS

In July of this year, Borealis Records produced a benefit concert for the Ottawa Folklore Centre with Lynn Miles, Sneezy Waters, Finest Kind, James Keelaghan, Terry Tufts, Chris MacLean, Bill Garrett and Paul Hornbeck.

The community came out in droves, filling the hall and recharging the Folklore Centre. We are so full of gratitude to all who helped. Visit our website to see why the Ottawa Folklore Centre evokes such wide support. You'll be amazed!

After 38 years, I still am!



Arthur McGregor

Photo by Sandy Ziegler

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accompanying version has always been considered fairly definitive. Boldt's pensive and mournful presentation on an acoustic guitar means all past claims are now null and void. This song, after all, is about a prisoner facing the gallows. What's even more thrilling is how Boldt's *Lazy John* sits so comfortably amidst such a bounty of traditional riches. Precious and imaginative, *Broadside Ballads* merits major respect.

— By Roddy Campbell

## Matt & Shannon Heaton

*Tell You In Earnest* (Independent)



This is the fifth CD from this Boston-based Irish music

duo. Their previous releases have mainly featured instrumentals but this one is a collection of 'dialogue ballads' with every song being a conversation between two protagonists. On *Lovely Annie*, the Annie and Captain Johnny converse after she dresses up as a foot soldier and follows him. On *Mrs. McGrath* it's a mother and son. He enters the British Army to fight against Napoleon and returns having lost his legs. *The Gallant Hussar* involves a young couple that would be lovers, despite the young woman being locked away from her beau by her parents. This is mostly a successful change of style although their instrumental playing is still the strongest part of their act. The title comes from the oft-covered Richard Thompson

song *Vincent Black Lightning*, which is one song that doesn't convince. Overall though, there's plenty here to enjoy.

— By Tim Readman

## Kaia Kater

*Sorrow Bound* (Independent)



I love stories like this, particularly for their incongruence: Kaia Kater

grew up in Toronto yet, somewhere along the way, developed a passion for old-time music and clawhammer banjo. She played, recorded, and won the Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival Scholarship to study in the heart of Appalachia at Davis & Elkins College in West Virginia.

Pause for a moment just to understand what that means. She's in Canada where people still see a mandolin and think it's a ukulele. There is no culture of old-time music, they don't teach it in schools, and we can live our entire lives without ever being exposed to it. Still, she gets to a point where she bests people who are from places where that culture exists—the people who compete at the summer festivals, if you've never seen these things, are astonishing. They've been exposed at a very young age, and are participating in something that surrounds them.

In going to Davis & Elkins Kater then is immersed in the culture, at times delivering it back to them from the stage. On the



her first full album, she demonstrates the kind of spirit and talent that all of that takes. She's still just 20 years old, and her voice will benefit from the maturation that's still to come. Her take on the music, and her ability to bring her personality to it, are already fully on display. A very impressive disc from someone we'll, no doubt, be hearing a lot more from.

— By Glen Herbert

## Various artists

*Dear Jean: Artists Celebrate Jean Ritchie* (Compass Records)



The ground lies thick with tribute albums of various stripes but few

feel as much like a labour of love as this double-album tribute to the music and legacy of Jean Ritchie—song collector, folk balladeer, hammerer of dulcimers, poet, proponent of “the timeless, shared community of song”. A list of notable names curated to interpret the 37 trad gems reprised here would take too many column inches, so try on Pete Seeger, Judy Collins, Tim O'Brien, Janis Ian, and Robin and Linda Williams for size. To be sure, there are minor melodies and bleak tales aplenty but that just makes standouts like Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer's

pure and simple rendition of *My Dear Companion* all the more radiant in their raw beauty. Liner notes by noted poet, farmer, and environmental activist Wendell Berry draw a poignant line between the music Ritchie enshrined in memory and its place in human ecology.

— By Scott Lingley

## Robert Plant and the Sensational Space Shifters

*Lullaby and the Ceaseless Roar* (Nonesuch)



When he's not shocking people by turning down hundreds of millions of

dollars to resurrect Led Zeppelin, Robert Plant is moving forward in a way that might actually please fans of his old dinosaur band. Much of what you hear on *Lullaby and the Ceaseless Roar*, the singer's tenth solo album, sounds like all of the same obsessions that Zep used to play with back in the day: world beat, folk, psychedelia, blues, R&B, early rock'n'roll. Except that where the mighty Zep often subsumed it all in hard rock roar, Plant's new outfit (the Sensational Space Shifters) are far more delicate interpreters, turning songs like the classic folk standard *Little Maggie* into strange, shape-shift-



Kaia Kater



ing mysteries, moving easily around Celtic and North African rhythms like it's no big thing. The music is all over the map, from pensive ballads (*A Stolen Kiss*) to lurching, looping electronic rock (*Turn It Up*), all laced with snaky guitar and tranced-out percussion. Maybe not what the classic rockers were hoping for but far more interesting than anything a half-hearted reunion would throw up.

— By Tom Murray

**Kenny Butterill**

Troubadour Tales (NoBullSongs)



Smooth and mellow are the words that first come to mind hearing Kenny Butterill's new disc. He's definitely that kind of guy. The Ajax-born, Ottawa-raised singer/songwriter has made a career of country living and avoiding the centres of the music business, preferring Northern California. He just concentrates on writing songs and recording them with the best musicians he can find. He finds some great ones. The most prominent one on the latest disc is '60s icon Donovan Leitch, who adds a great mellow harmonica and helped mix the track *Gaia Blues*, which also

has some silky bluesy guitar by Ray Bonneville and superb backing vocals by Zoe Muth. That kind of smooth, lived-in playing is all over the record by the likes of Red Volkaert, Cindy Cashdollar, John Lee Sanders, Jim Norris, Jim Lewin, David Grier, John Reischman, Washboard Hank, Harpin' Jonny, and others. Other sweet highlights are *Cyrano's Song*, *Pajaro Dunes*, *Hocus Pocus*, *The Greatest Love Story Never Told*, and *True North*. Every song contains something worth listening to: a nicely phrased guitar passage, a gorgeous harmonica riff, or an interesting lyric, and all of it is as comfortable and relaxed as a favourite flannel shirt. Nice stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

**Lisa LeBlanc**

Highways, Heartaches and Time Well Wasted (Independent)



New Brunswick's LeBlanc brings a fearless intensity to her percolating, banjo-driven Acadian blues, daring to stomp, roar, and wail when the spirit of the tune demands it. But the punk-rock edginess that lurks in even the quietest lulls of the songs compiled here is coun-



terbalanced by a melodic and lyrical sense that connects it with the fundamental impulses of folk music. Her take on *Katie Cruel*, the most traditional-sounding track, is lent a subtle streak of defiance by LeBlanc's strong, unaffected delivery. *You Look Like Trouble (But I Guess I Do Too)* melds pulsing Appalachian grittiness to throaty guitars and thudding rhythm, rising to a heady emotional pitch in a mere three minutes, while *Golden Diggin' Hoedown* veers giddily into garage-rock territory with its gnashing hi-hats. LeBlanc might piss off a more true-blue breed of

folk enthusiast with such boldness but that's part of what makes *Highways, Heartaches and Time Well Wasted* so much fun.

— By Scott Lingley

**Jenn Grant**

Compostela (Outside Music)

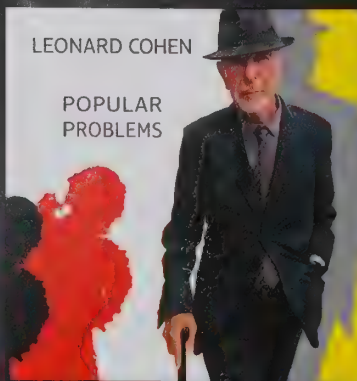


nominee and East Coast Music Award recipient, has released her fifth album, *Compostela*, an ethereal journey of self-discovery.

*Compostela* is Spanish, meaning field of stars, a celestial map to a place of pilgrimage. In 2012, Jenn lost her guiding star, her mother to cancer. In her mother's final days, she expressed hopeful wishes to Jenn that she will meet her in Spain. *Compostela* is the resulting homage to her mother and Jenn's journey to Spain.

Daniel Ledwell, Jenn's husband and album producer, melds her clear, dolce voice with the lush and rich instrumentation of flute, harps, violins, congas, wurlitzer, piano, and lap steel guitar. *Compostela* shines with Canadian stars, such as Doug Paisley, Sarah Harmer, Buck 65, Ron Sexsmith

**Win a Copy of Leonard Cohen's Popular Problems**



The Montreal-born poet and songwriter's popularity seems to increase the older he gets. At aged 80, he has just released *Popular Problems*, his 13th album in a 46-year recording career. *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper in the U.K. described it as a masterpiece. And *The Guardian* wrote: "Cohen is in vicious form ... and full of surprises." Arguably, only Bob Dylan stands in the same exalted company. Cohen's *Hallelujah* is widely considered one of the greatest songs ever written and has been covered by such diverse

performers as Willie Nelson, Bono of U2 and Justin Timberlake. Columbia Records has very kindly donated six copies of *Popular Problems* for some knowledgeable readers to win. To receive one, correctly answer the questions below and email them to [penguineggs@shaw.ca](mailto:penguineggs@shaw.ca). Put Leonard Cohen Contest as the subject. And please, don't forget to include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

**Q 1: What Leonard Cohen album did Phil Spector produce?**

**Q 2: Name the Leonard Cohen tribute album that features R.E.M.**

**Q3: *Sisters of Mercy* was written in which Canadian city?**

Answers to Martin Simpson's *Vagrant Stanzas* contest are: Q1: The Furthest Cut Is The Deepest, Q2: Danu. Q3: His dad.

And the Winners are: John Bridge, Waterdown, ON; David Esk, Sudbury, ON; Marilyn Matheson, Fernie, BC; Francis Bethune.

Edmonton, AB; David Valente, Toronto, ON; and Emily O' Hare, Regina, SK.



Rose Cousins, and Justin Rutledge. Each song is a brilliant melodic journey of familial love, beautifully enhanced by the backup vocals of her friends. *Compostela* is an exquisite listening excursion.

— By Phil Harries

## Oscar Lopez



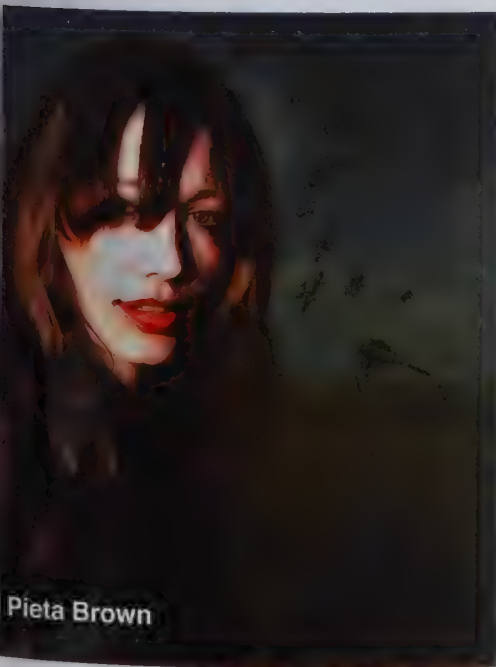
Apasionado (Independent)

Canadian guitarist and composer Oscar Lopez was born in Santiago, Chile, but now lives in Calgary, AB.

Known for his new flamenco style, in conjunction with various rhythmic traditions from South America, Lopez puts together a tight sound with tasteful licks and explorations on classical guitar. Formerly recording with James Keelaghan as one half of Compadres, Lopez has released a solo album, *Apasionado*. The scope of the album is large, with a wealth of additional musicians adding to Lopez's tuneful compositions. With such a big sound, the guitar could get lost in the ambience, but fortunately that has not happened. Lopez's guitar holds centre stage whenever he's playing.

Among the 14 tracks on the album, certain ones stand out. *Line of Fire* evokes an element of mystery that leads into flamenco-style vocals, while *Tears* displays a melancholic side to Lopez's work. The playful *Treasures of Vienna* echoes classical music in a jazzy fashion. *Flying with the Comets* may be the best track of all, showing Lopez at his most complex as a composer. If the album has a shortcoming it's the absence of traditional flamenco sizzle. Overall, *Apasionado* is a pleasant, easy-listening album that will fit nicely into the soft side of your collection.

— By Gene Wilburn



Pieta Brown

## Pieta Brown

Paradise Outlaw (Red House Records)

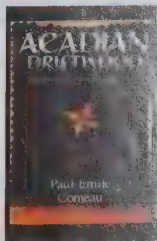


Drowsy, impressionistic folk fragments with little whirls of spooky electric guitar, made by a woman who's been cultivating variations on this for a decade or so now. Last time she hit the studio (2011's *Mercury*) Brown opted for a straighter approach, but for *Paradise Outlaw* she picks up the banjo, unfetters her lyrics, slurs words, opens the doors into dreamland. The mood is quiet and sombre, dominated by sepia tinged character sketches (*Letter in Hand*, *Back to You*) and plenty of stream-of-consciousness (*All My Rain*) Partner Bo Ramsey is there as usual, co-producing and playing electric; Greg Brown, her dad, shows up to help out on acoustic guitar on her cover of Mark Knopfler's *Before Gas & TV*, and she teams up for a gorgeous duet with Amos Lee on *Do You Know*. Languid, entrancing and utterly bewitching

— By Tom Murray

# Books

## Acadian Driftwood: The Roots Of Acadian and Cajun Music



By Paul-Emile Comeau  
ISBN 1-78-1-894997-40-9

1st Music Book 348 pages \$39.95

Although there have been previous books on Cajun and zydeco music, this is the first book that presents a history of Acadian/Cajun music in Canada and the U.S. Paul-Emile Comeau may be uniquely qualified to write such a book. As a direct descendant of the original French settlers of Acadie, he now lives in Comeauville, NS, and has been both an appreciator and historian of this kind of music since attending the the Newport folk festival in July 1969, where he first saw Cajun fiddler Doug Kershaw.

As a writer, he's contributed to a wide range of publications, including *Penguin Eggs*, *Rolling Stone* and *No Depression*. As a broadcaster, he has written and hosted programs for the CBC and Le Réseau francophone d'Amérique).

Besides giving a chronology of events of Acadian history, the book provides detailed stories behind some of the landmark songs of the genre *Évangéline*, *Jolie Blonde* (a.k.a. *Jole Blon*), *Jambalaya*, *J'ai fait tout le tour du pays*, *Acadie à la Louisiane*, and *The Band's Acadian Driftwood*, from which the book takes

its title. He documents both the similarities and the differences in musical traditions north and south of the border and provides hundreds of informative artist profiles and selected discographies. There are profiles of recording industry leaders, radio, and media, as well as organizations and festivals. He doesn't neglect the wider picture either, noting France's relationship to the music and acts from England, Northern Europe, Spain, and even Italy. Also covered are the relations and interactions between Acadian, Cajun, zydeco, rock, blues, jazz, swing, bluegrass, and country and western artists whose roots were in Acadia but who found recognition in other areas. He seems to enjoy finding and exploring little niches such as women in Cajun music, instrumental music live music, novelty, and Christmas discs, which are knowledgeable and fun. His comments on such topics as racism and nationalism are equally insightful. In addition, the 32 pages of colour photographs of both artists and album art are very welcome.

Comeau's style is conversational and accessible and, despite the density of information, the book is easy to read. As a reference it's pretty complete. A highly recommended addition for anybody's music library.

— By Barry Hammond

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## Les Poules à Colin

**Leur feuille de route impeccable laissait présager un potentiel immense, indéniablement confirmé par leur nouvel album.**

By Yves Bernard

Pour la musique traditionnelle du Québec, les lendemains semblent prometteurs et il est un groupe qui résume le passage des générations: Les Poules à Colin, qui a lancé en novembre dernier *Ste-Waves*, un deuxième disque officiel qui ouvre vers une nouvelle étape, celle d'une reconnaissance encore plus marquée.

« *Ste-Waves* est un concept imaginaire dont nous sommes constamment en recherche », explique Colin Savoie-Levac qui reprend l'idée illustrée dans la pochette. Il est le Colin des « Poules », celui qui leur a permis de trouver un nom de légende : « *Les poules à Colin* », en l'honneur ou en clin d'œil à l'une des plus illustres chansons traditionnelles québécoises. Le nom du groupe évoque aussi la richesse de la passation, tout comme les cinq membres du groupe : un gars et quatre filles, qui sont issus de familles de

musiciens traditionnels encore actifs.

Le phénomène paraît unique. Colin Savoie-Levac, aux instruments à cordes ou aux pieds, et sa soeur Marie, fils et fille de Denise Levac, la flûtiste qui est passée par Manigance et Dentdelion, un groupe dont elle partage maintenant les destinées avec Colin et Béatrix Méthé, la chanteuse violoneuse des Poules, dont les parents Claude Méthé et Dana Whittle sont de valeureux pionniers du milieu depuis plus de trois décennies. Ils ont créé Dentdelion et bien d'autres projets. Par exemple, Dana est à la source de la fondation de Folquébec, la première organisation vouée à la promotion internationale des artistes folk au Québec. Et ce n'est pas tout. L'excellent guitariste Paul Marchand, une autre figure du trad québécois, est le père de la pianiste chanteuse Sarah Marchand-Lebossé, alors que Gilles Pitre, le père d'Éléonore, la guitariste du jeune groupe lanauois, fut même directeur du festival Mémoire et Racines où les Poules ont fait leurs débuts. Voilà qui n'est pas commun!

« Marie et Éléonore sont passées par la scène « relève » de Mémoire et Racines, puis c'est par là que nous avons commencé vers 2008-2009. Nous nous connaissons par l'entremise de nos parents depuis que nous sommes enfants, mais nous n'avions pas nécessairement joué ensemble avant de fonder les Poules », raconte Colin Savoie-Levac. À l'âge de douze ans, il a commencé par

l'apprentissage de la mandoline, puis il a ajouté la guitare, le banjo et le bouzouki, entre autres. Il fait aujourd'hui partie des Duhks et remplace parfois au sein de la Bottine souriante ou du groupe De Temps Antan. Comme Marie, Sarah et Éléonore, il a étudié en jazz pop et cela s'entend dans la musique du groupe. Si les Poules partent de la musique traditionnelle, ils puisent aussi beaucoup dans le folk, la new acoustic music et la musique indépendante contemporaine.

Comment fonctionnent-ils? Chaque membre du groupe fait-il valoir un intérêt pour un style qu'il affectionne? « Ce n'est pas nécessairement chaque personne qui apporte une influence précise. Le traditionnel vient peut-être plus de moi, de Béatrix et de Sarah parce qu'on en a beaucoup joué dans nos vies, mais en même temps, on arrange toujours les pièces à cinq et les influences viennent aussi de ce que nous écoutons », répond Colin.

Qu'ont-ils écouté le plus lorsqu'ils ont enregistré *Ste-Waves* avec le réalisateur Simon Maric? « Des choses super pop, mais aussi le groupe Alt-J qui nous a beaucoup inspiré par ses harmonies vocales et les Punch Brothers pour leur mélange de punch, de trad et de pop. Leur approche pour l'enregistrement est impressionnante ». Cela permet d'en comprendre un peu plus l'esprit de *Ste-Waves*, un disque profondément traditionnel et parfaitement ouvert aux tendances actuelles de la pop mondiale de création, à l'in-





Le disque est aussi bellement imprégné d'une âme nord-américaine par ses passages atmosphériques à la guitare slide, ses cordes acoustiques qui rockent, son piano qui jasse ou son violon et sa mandoline qui improvisent. En plus, la chanson-titre est interprétée en anglais. Cela confère au groupe un caractère unique.

age de la jeunesse des membres du groupe qui sont tous dans la jeune vingtaine.

Le disque est aussi bellement imprégné d'une âme nord-américaine par ses passages atmosphériques à la guitare slide, ses cordes acoustiques qui rockent, son piano qui jasse ou son violon et sa mandoline qui improvisent. En plus, la chanson-titre est interprétée en anglais. Cela confère au groupe un caractère unique: « On a commencé en tant que groupe traditionnel québécois, mais on joue de la musique qu'on aime. On chante en français parce que c'est notre culture et les chansons traditionnelles sont en français parce que c'est notre tradition, mais Ste-Waves est une composition de Béatrix et elle est sortie en anglais. Sur le disque précédent, il y avait deux chansons en anglais qui avaient été écrites par Dana Whittle, la mère de Béa. C'est sa langue maternelle. Alors le français et l'anglais, ce sont deux langues qu'on aime ».

Et dans tout cela, Lanaudière s'entend dans toutes les pièces, par la chanson ou le reel, au fond des pièces ou complètement à la surface. Presque la moitié des pièces sont traditionnelles et les histoires des textes des chansons sont bien choisies : l'amour et le départ pour la guerre, les souffrances de la vie en ménage, la bergère tout au long d'un petit bois charmant, la promise qui s'embarque sur un vaisseau habillée en homme ... « Dans la tradition, il y a souvent des chansons qui ne veulent pas nécessairement dire quoi que ce soit. On essaie d'éviter ça et d'aller vers des histoires concrètes, des belles histoires. Prends la chanson L'Écolier. Dans la fin des chansons traditionnelles, la femme va souvent être trompée ou laissée de côté, mais cette fois-ci, elle se ramasse avec deux maris et elle a choisi les deux. C'est une victoire féminine que nous chantons ici », dit Colin.

Parmi les influences du groupe, il cite les parents des Poules, les nombreux musiciens trad qu'ils connaissent et de façon particulière, le groupe américain Nightingale et Éric Beaudry : « Que ce soit avec Norouet, De Temps Antan ou les Frères Beaudry, il possède une façon d'aborder les chansons traditionnelles avec une approche un peu plus pop. C'est quelque chose que nous

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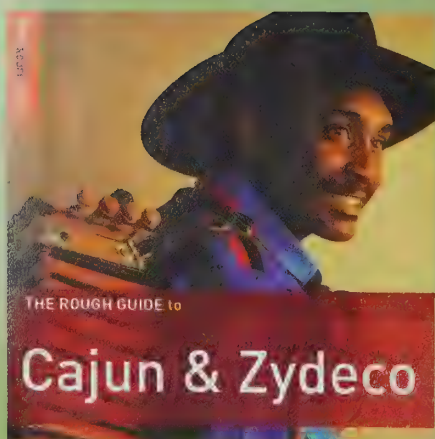
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# Les Benoits

## Traditionnelle musique française de Port-au-Port, Terre-Neuve.

La péninsule Port-au-Port sur la côte Ouest de Terre-Neuve a engendré certains des plus grands musiciens francophones du pays, dont le violoniste Émile Benoit et l'accordéoniste Bernard Félix. Toutefois, la lutte pour maintenir une société distincte à l'intérieur d'une autre société distincte n'a pas été de tout repos. La plus vieille génération de Terre-Neuviens francophones en sait quelque chose : c'est elle qui a dû vivre les années de répression active de sa langue et de son héritage.

Les activités du gouvernement, des établissements d'enseignement et des institutions religieuses étaient toutes menées en anglais, ce qui entraîna une assimilation à grande échelle et eut pour conséquence l'extinction du français terre-neuvien originel. Il y a 20 ans, quand le violoniste Doug Benoit et son père, l'accordéoniste Mattis Benoit, fondèrent leur groupe de musique familial, la situation avait changé. Les associations francophones, l'établissement de programmes d'éducation en français et les festivals de musique folk tels qu'Une Longue Veillée, dans les années 70, encourageaient la célébration de la culture francophone chez les locuteurs français et anglais. Le cœur de The Benoits a toujours été le duo formé par le père et le fils, Mattis et Doug. Le groupe a vu passer plusieurs autres membres ; mais à l'heure actuelle, il se compose du fils de

Doug, Devon, à la batterie et à la guitare et de son neveu Shane Blanchard, à la basse. La musique française occupe la majeure partie de son répertoire, bien que ses membres mentionnent également l'apport des musiques irlandaises et écossaises.

« Mon père jouait beaucoup de musique française, mais il avait quelques amis, dont un docteur irlandais dénommé Dr McCann, qui jouait de l'accordéon et qui lui a donné le goût d'en jouer à son tour », explique Doug Benoit. « Pour ce qui est de moi, je crois que j'ai été influencé par la musique du Cap-Breton. Ivan White était un violoniste gaucher connu à Stephenville. Je venais d'avoir 14 ans et un jour que j'étais malade et alité, Ivan est venu à la maison avec un album de Jerry Holland et me l'a fait écouter. Le son était unique et je me suis à désirer savoir jouer comme ça. J'allais dans ma chambre et je rendais ma famille folle avec les grattages et les grincements inhérents à mon apprentissage », se souvient-il en riant.

Il y a deux ans, The Benoits ont lancé leur premier album intitulé La Farine, d'après une histoire que racontait la grand-mère de Doug, Florence Leprieur, sur un bateau qui s'échoue dans un banc de sable au large de la péninsule Port-au-Port. « La seule manière de sortir du banc de sable était de se débarrasser du poids excédentaire et de jeter les sacs de farine par-dessus bord. Les sacs flottèrent jusqu'à l'Anse-aux-Canards où ma grand-mère en repêcha 18. Elle demanda alors à Émile Benoit de l'aider à les ramener à la maison avec sa charrette et son cheval. »

Leur album et ses chansons rythmées, ses contes et ses airs pleins de vie a reçu un bon

accueil et leur a valu des invitations à participer à des festivals au Canada et en France. Malheureusement, Mattis a passé l'arme à gauche en 2013, mais les autres membres ont décidé de continuer et ressentent souvent sa présence, comme s'il était toujours avec eux.

« Après la mort de papa, nous devions jouer en France avec le guitariste Duane Andrews, et je ressentais toutes sortes d'émotions à l'idée d'y aller », se souvient Benoit. « Duane a dit : Vous devriez y aller, ça vous ferait peut-être du bien », et nous avons suivi son conseil. J'avais appris à jouer une des chansons de papa à l'accordéon et je voulais la jouer sur scène en France car je croyais qu'il aurait aimé que je le fasse. Après j'étais supposé prendre mon violon, mais j'ai gardé l'accordéon et au lieu, j'ai joué trois airs que je n'avais jamais joués à l'accordéon. Maintenant quand je joue de l'accordéon ma main droite devient froide. Quand mon père jouait, ses mains étaient toujours froides. Les miennes sont toujours chaudes. »

Par Jean Hewson

Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard

## Stéphane Robitaille

Fuck you mon amour (Indépendant)

Travailler dans un club vidéo peut avoir de bons côtés. Par exemple, cela peut vous per-

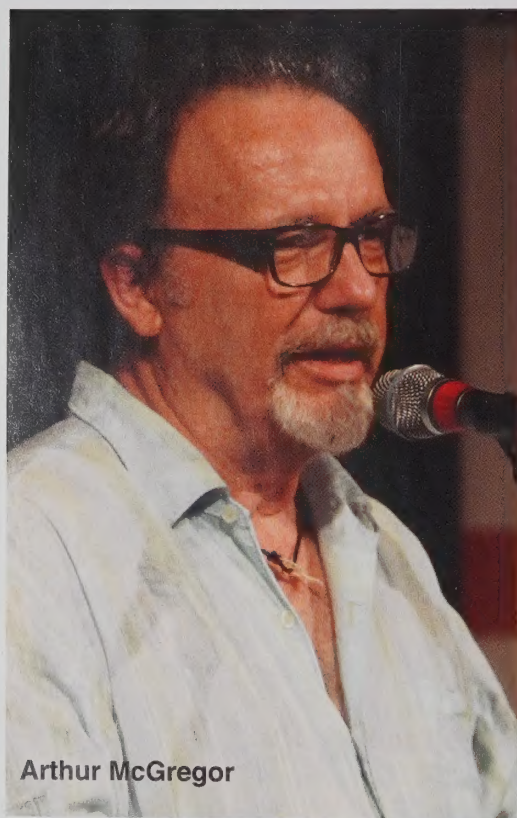


mettre de tuer le temps en écrivant de grandes chansons. C'est ce qui est arrivé à Stéphane Robitaille. Illustre inconnu de par le monde, celui

qui répugne à participer à des concours de chansons a finalement décidé de faire plaisir à la trentaine d'admirateurs qui le suivent depuis 6 ans en sortant son premier album. Si son titre laisse dubitatif, il en est autrement de ses 14 chansons feutrées, drôles, tristes et imaginatives aux arrangements magnifiques. Robitaille a su s'entourer de musiciens solides dont le talent est reconnu dans le micromilieu musical de la ville de Québec, qui ont habillé ses chansons d'une instrumentation originale et diversifiée (glockenspiel, lap steel, banjo, contrebasse et autres) à la hauteur de ses textes sensibles. Versant assurément dans l'humour noir et n'ayant pas peur des mots, cet auteur-compositeur-interprète n'aura peut-être pas besoin de gagner un concours pour partager avec le monde la profondeur de sa tendresse et la force de sa colère.

Par Véronique G.-Allard





Arthur McGregor

Arthur McGregor is the director of the Ottawa Folklore Centre. Here he takes umbrage with the transformation that has taken place at the Ottawa Folk Festival since a change in ownership in 2011.

In the Winter issue of Penguin Eggs, 2012, I wrote an opinion piece about the “new” Ottawa Folk Festival. I posited that, irrespective of what this festival seemed to be at any given time, it was the “Ottawa Folk Festival” and our current choice was to work with it or have no festival.

“...I’d also prefer the Ottawa Folk Festival than no festival” were my closing lines.

I have changed my mind.

The 2014 event was the first Ottawa Folk Festival I have not performed at or even attended! Due to my inability to support the changes made, I have pulled out of all the Folklore Centre’s and my personal involvement with the festival.

Upon perusing the current Ottawa Folk Festival website, it seems that there is an inkling of a folk theme throughout the weekend. Some workshop stages, a kids’ area, beer, food, and an effusive volunteer description. When compared to the Ottawa Blues Fest, it gives the impression of a hard left turn from the corporate, controlled atmosphere evident at the summer event. But I feel that this is merely the remnants of the original Ottawa Folk Festival

and, each year, more and more disappears.

The first thing that disappeared was the main stage programming focus. The lineups for 2013 and 2014 were representative of neither folk music nor the folk community. Not a big surprise but a disappointment. There now seems to be a different definition of what is expected out of a folk festival. A couple of years ago, a rap singer from New York opened his early-evening main stage set with “How ya doin’ ya motherfuckers!” When asked how some of the pop-ier and rock-ier acts could be considered folk, folk fest AD and executive producer Mark Monahan suggested that they “all had stories to tell”. After years of debate on the definition of folk music, Monahan certainly is not hesitant to use his definition to justify his hiring. Rather than program an event from a conceptual point of view, we’ve been witness to the shotgun idea of programming: shove as many stages and players as you can into the space, turn the volume to loud and let the space take care of itself. All that’s needed to be successful is a full house and as many ways to get money out of pockets as possible.

The sound bleed between stages has been outrageous. And it has been from the beginning of the new Ottawa Folk Festival. There is certainly a lack of respect for the more acoustic acts with both workshops and concerts becoming unlistenable due to a loud, big-money act on one of the main stages. This year, there were sound complaints from residents of the nearest neighbourhood, about three kilometres away!

The next thing to disappear was the community of folks who created, built, and supported the original Ottawa Folk Festival over its first 19 years. Volunteers, organizers, site managers, sound techs, stage hands, and more started to come up against the new sheriff in town, didn’t like the vibe, and left. An audience that had been attending and supporting the original festival for years were left out of the mix, discovering that most main-stage shows were oriented to a younger crowd who only stood. If you wanted to sit, you’d have to become a member of a “club” to get seating at a substantially higher price. Or you could go to the FREE area and try to listen to some acoustic act over the wall of sound emanating from the paid area.

Then there’s the day-time workshop area. Due to physical limitations of the location, this side of the festival is free. The workshops have always been the area that I have felt was important. I’m a grassroots guy and appreciate

the importance of helping folks find their music somewhat organically. I have always avoided suggesting to festival ADs who they should hire (with the exception of a list of Canadian French-language folk acts to try to get Mr. Monahan to hire some, unsuccessfully!) but I had strong opinions about the workshop stages since the beginning of the original Ottawa Folk Festival. The Folklore Centre started out booking the workshop stages for the new festival and hired an incredible person to accomplish this. The new festival decided to use the same person but from the festival offices and the Folklore Centre accepted a supporting role.

Mark Monahan is a guy who likes to be in control. I’ve been told by folks who work under him that he feels an organization like only works with one leader. I am a receiver of this type of “partnership”, having agreed to organize and run the Bluesfest School of Music only to be cut out after two years of planning without a “Howjado,” but losing teachers, programs, employees, and students to his school.

Yep, I really have changed my mind.

I have no illusions that anything I have done over the past four years at the Ottawa Folk Festival have made any difference whatsoever to the ticket sales for the weekend, so I really don’t feel that I was missed. (except the Folk in the School ... we are really good working with kids!)

And I don’t have anything against a big urban music festival that draws a different demographic than mine. There has been some excellent music presented at the new Ottawa Folk Festival, including some great folk music.

It’s just that this is a lousy direction for “folk” in Ottawa to head. The new festival has alienated most of the active folk community, absorbed a huge amount of funding from all government levels, and misrepresents the true experience of a folk festival. Unfortunately, this is becoming relatively common across the country. Fortunately for Ottawa, there’s the Grassroots Folk Festival, building over the last three years promising to revive an authentic folk experience in Ottawa.

Last week, a customer told me that in the federal civil service, you can’t Google ‘folk’ on government computers. The computers are programmed to refuse a four-letter word that starts with ‘f’ and ends with ‘k’.

Move along folks... Ain’t no folk festival here!



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The prolific Harry Manx bridges east and west with musical short stories that wed the tradition of the Blues with the depth of classical Indian ragas. He performs in a unique double-bill with acclaimed singer-songwriter Basia Bulat.



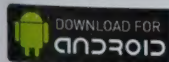
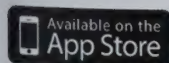
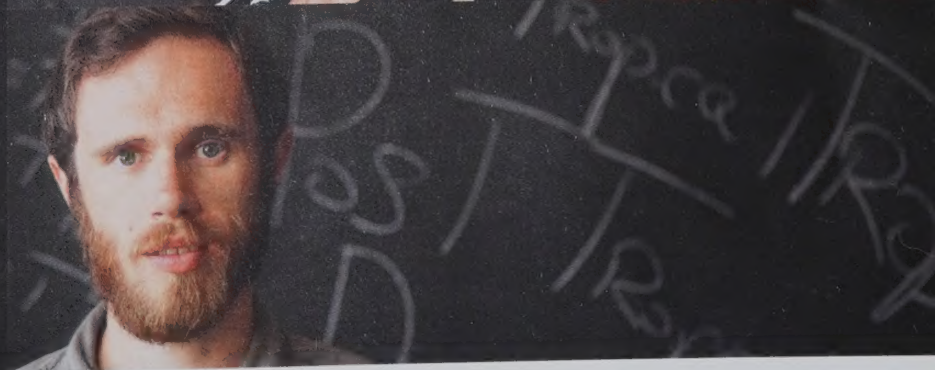
## ROSANNE CASH FEBRUARY 1

Singer and songwriter Rosanne Cash tours with her latest album *The River and the Thread*. Rich and resonant, her work is noted for its emotional acuity, and has garnered her twelve Grammy nominations and eleven No. 1 singles.



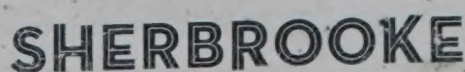
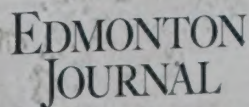
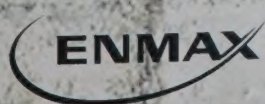
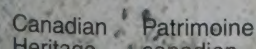
## JAMES VINCENT MCMORROW FEBRUARY 24

Beloved Irish Troubadour James Vincent McMorrow visits the Winspear in this solo performance after just releasing a deluxe version of his critically praised sophomore album *Post Tropical* in Canada.



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For tickets call 780-428-1414 or visit [WinspearCentre.com](http://WinspearCentre.com)







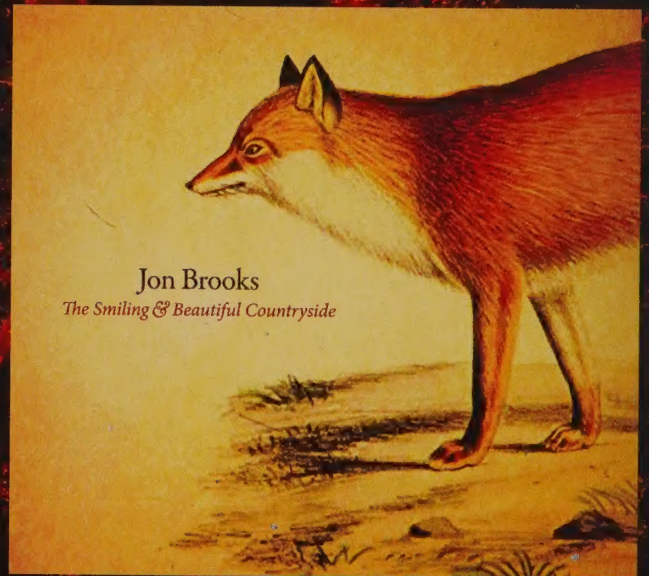
# Jon Brooks

## *The Smiling & Beautiful Countryside*

is a collection of topical Canadian murder ballads that are at once disquieting, pastoral, elegiac, bloody, paradoxical and brashly humorous in a gallows kind of way.

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*"One of our most poetic writers, he crafts vivid portraits of gun dealers, serial killers, real-life murders ("Queensville"), and the abuses suffered by our First Nations."*

*– Kerry Doole, newcanadianmusic.ca*

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